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FEB 1937

HUNTING TRIPS IN THE CAUCASUS



DEAD AUROCHS (*BOS URUS*).

HUNTING TRIPS

IN

THE CAUCASUS

BY

E. DEMIDOFF

PRINCE SAN DONATO

WITH 96 ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAP

LONDON

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1898

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To

MY FRIEND AND COMPANION

ST. GEORGE LITTLEDALE

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

THE present volume contains a faithful account of three shooting trips to three different parts of the Caucasus. The first describes from my own notes a month's experience in the territory of the Grand Duke Sergius Mikhailovitch in the Kouban district, to the N.W. of the Larger Laba river, in the autumn of 1895. The second trip, made in the summer of 1896, in the company of Dr. H. D. Levick, is described by the latter from a series of notes he took, partly his own, partly from my dictation, and was directed towards the Russo-Persian Frontier between the Ararats and Ordoubad along the famous valley of the Araxes, where the Ibex (*Capra Ægagrus*) particularly attracted my attention. We also visited in the course of this trip the snowy patch of hills called the Alagueuz Range, about twenty miles north of Erivan; but, as will be seen, without success. Finally, my third expedition in the autumn of the same year brought me back to the

Kouban district—this time to the S.E. of the Great Laba. Dr. Levick again accompanied me, and Mr. St. George Littledale joined us at Battalpaschinsk. The description of this last journey is also from the pen of Dr. Levick.

I have visited the Caucasus several times, and learnt to appreciate the sporting capabilities of the country, but I have selected these three trips especially for description because they were accomplished in districts richest in game.

The Caucasus—that link connecting two great continents, Asia and Europe—has formed for centuries past the great path of nations from East to West, and has thereby received its well-defined mark of heterogeneousness through the different stages of the history of mankind. Europeans and Asiatics, Christians and Mahomedans, there intermingle; every tribe that has crossed this isthmus has left traces of its passage, giving rise to a second Babel, and affording a most curious amalgamation of languages and religions—an open and interesting field for ethnographical investigation. This striking feature may be likewise usefully applied to animal life; there one finds remnants of European forms combined with those of Asia: bison and leopard, stag and tiger, ibex and burhel, chamois and antelope,

abound in that comparatively narrow stretch of country between Ekaterinodar and Lenkoran, and from Batoum to Baku. Regarding birds the same phenomenon of course occurs: the snow partridge shares the hills with European partridges and black game, the latter being represented in the Caucasus by *Tetrao Mlokotzievici*, an entirely distinct species.

It is hoped that this book, written in part by a foreigner, will meet with indulgence from English sportsmen, to whom in its English dress it is especially dedicated.

DEMIDOFF.

CONTENTS

First Hunting Expedition.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE GAME OF THE CAUCASUS	1
II. WE START FOR THE HILLS	24
III. OUR FIRST CAMP	30
IV. <i>EN ROUTE</i> FOR TCHELIPSI	52
V. A FRESH START	60
VI. THE SOURCES OF THE KISHA	67
VII. THE VALLEY OF THE URUSHTEN	82
VIII. OUR LAST CAMP	99

Second Hunting Expedition.

(*PERSIAN FRONTIER.*)

I. PREPARATIONS FOR THE VOYAGE	111
II. CONSTANTINOPLE	118
III. BATOUM TO TIFLIS	127
IV. A VISIT TO BORJOM	144
V. ERIVAN AND THE ALAGUEUZ MOUNTAINS	153
VI. RETURN TO ERIVAN	182
VII. NEGRAM-DAGH	197
VIII. NEGRAM-POST	216

Third Hunting Expedition.

THE KOUBAN DISTRICT	235
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Dead Aurochs (<i>Bos urus</i>)	frontispiece
The Caucasian Stag	7
The Ibex or Tûr	11
Silver-grey Bear	14
Brown Bear	15
The Snow Partridge	18
The Caucasian Black-cock	19
Preparing for the Start	32
"The path was far from an easy one"	37
The Djahalipsh	41
"I fired at the one which seemed to carry the best head"	57
"Galloping off in frantic disorder"	65
"Finding him asleep a few yards off"	69
"His horns laid well against his back"	73
"We were in full view of the bison"	77
The Sentinel Chamois	81
"Out dashed a hind, followed by a huge spotted cat"	84
The Snow Leopard	85
"My hunter had to grip the end of my jacket"	91
"Finished him at close quarters"	95
She-Bear with two Cubs playing on the snow	101
Junction of the Umpyr and Lesser Laba streams	105
Head of <i>Capra Caucasica</i>	110
Ruins, Athens	114
The Acropolis, Athens	115
Greek in Native Costume	116
On the Quay, Smyrna	117

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

xv

	PAGE
Interior of St. Sophia, Constantinople	121
Hotel de Londres, Tiflis	131
Tiflis	134
Ferry-boat, Tiflis	135
Tiflis from the Kura River	137
Main Bridge, Tiflis	139
The Bazaar, Tiflis	141
In the Bazaar, Tiflis	142
The Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovitch	145
The Grand Duke Nicholas' Residence, Borjom	146
<i>Capra Ægagrus</i>	147
Borjom	148
The Emir of Bokhara	149
Guests of the Grand Duke at Borjom	151
The Ararats	159
Erivan	161
Russian Officials, Erivan. (Prince Nakaschidze)	162
Native and Russian Officers	165
Hasanaha, Kurd Chief, Alagueuz	167
View of the Alagueuz Peaks	168
Our Camp on the Alagueuz	169
Hunters and Caravan Men, Alagueuz	170
Our Cook, Alagueuz	171
Natives and Servant, Alagueuz	172
Hasanaha by his Tent	173
Our Caravan Men	174
On the Alagueuz Mountains	175
In Camp	176
Village Huts and Natives, Bazardjouk	177
A Native Girl, Bazardjouk	179
Native Village	181
Native Carts, Erivan	184
Nahitchewan	187
Native Hunters, Dari-Dagh	193
Our Hunters on the Persian Frontier	198
Valley of the Araxes	202
First Blood, on the Persian Frontier	206

	PAGE
The Best Head	212
Russian Frontier Post, Negram	217
On the Persian Frontier	218
Our Home, Persian Frontier	220
Ibex Rocks overlooking the Araxes Valley	223
On the Georgian Road	236
Valley of the Terek, Georgian Road	237
Our Russian Hunters, Ermolenko and Kroutenko	241
Monastery at Zellentchuk	246
Ruins of Ancient Church in the Zellentchuk Valley	247
Government Forester's House	249
Preparations for the Start	251
Nagoi, a Favourite Hunter	253
Pitching Camp in the Arkhyz Valley	256
In the Hills	257
Government Forest-keeper, Kouban	261
Hills and Main Range, Caucasus	267
Too Heavy	268
Our Companion Krym	269
Our Camp on the Pass, Zellentchuk-Laba	271
Native Camp	273
A Halt by the Snow	279
On the Way to the Zagdan Valley	281
Native Hunter, Usoup	293
Our way over a Pass from Zagdan Valley	300
Atzgara Rocks	301
Making Bread	303
Our Camp	305
Our Caravan	315
Our Tent after the Fire	316
Our Last Camp	317
Storojevoi Stanitza	318

FIRST HUNTING EXPEDITION
IN THE
Kouban District of the Caucasus

CHAPTER I.

THE GAME OF THE CAUCASUS.

ENGLISH readers will doubtless be interested in the description of a shooting expedition in a district not previously explored by sportsmen; where, with the exception of a few wild Tcherkesse (native mountaineers), no man has ever camped; and where paths have been everywhere made by wild animals, as if human beings and civilization had been repelled for ages from this unexplored country. When I state that this part of the Caucasus has never been visited by any sportsman, I of course except an Englishman, Mr. St. George Littledale, who in 1887, 1888, and finally in 1891, camped for the third time on the timber line above the deep valleys of the Kisha (native Tcheggs), and succeeded in getting two speci-

mens of the Aurochs, which are now set up in the Natural History Museum, and form one of its greatest attractions. Natives of the Caucasus themselves hardly believed that this splendid animal dwelt on their mountains, although I had heard of several of them having had the luck to kill one; but this was pure chance, and, as I say, very few sportsmen have ever accomplished this difficult task. Moreover, the district which I visited in the autumn of 1895 has during the last few years been strictly preserved by the Grand Duke Sergius Mikhailovitch, son of the Grand Duke Michael, who in former years was Viceroy of the Caucasus.

Native shepherds have been partly driven off the pastures with their *baranta* (cattle), as they used to disturb the mountain game in summer, and a number of first-rate keepers, most of them belonging to the neighbouring villages (*stanitzas*), have been appointed by His Highness to keep poachers off the ground he has rented, and which covers an area of about 500,000 acres. This would be very difficult to do if it were not for the character of the country, which like an impregnable fortress makes invasion extremely difficult. Now and then we encountered one or two rough and half wild natives on their way to cross the Pseaschkha Pass; but whether they ever

got safe to the other side, *i.e.*, to the Black Sea, we never knew.

One of the most important reasons for which this district is so highly estimated is, that it is the habitat of the so-called *zubr* or European bison (*Bos bonasus*), and the only place in the old world where it still exists in a savage state. In Lithuania the Bielowiecza Park contains a large number of them, but they can hardly be called wild; and besides, I am inclined to believe that they are not identical with their Caucasian cousin.*

Not so long ago the Aurochs used to haunt most of the valleys of the Kouban territories, such as the Zellentchuk, where there are said to be some at the present time, both the Great and Little Laba, Urrushten, and elsewhere. But so shy an animal could not long continue to live within easy reach of men, and had constantly to retire before advancing civilization. It is now concentrated in the dense forests overlooking the valleys of the Kisha, and fifty years hence it is to be feared will have entirely disappeared.

There is no doubt of the existence of the Aurochs

* I agree with Dr. Radde, who states that they are not smaller than their Lithuanian brethren; but I have heard that the number of ribs is different, although this opinion has yet to be confirmed.

on the southern part of the Caucasian range, between the hills and the Black Sea; but I have never visited that side, and was told that it was much harder work to approach them there, for the slopes are far steeper, and covered with virgin and almost impenetrable forest. When frightened, they wander great distances without taking rest, and are not stopped even by the highest ridges, over which they climb, notwithstanding their weight, which attains 1700 lbs. or more. There is no proof that they do not travel to and fro over the main range in the Kouban district, and I do not see why they should not. I have myself seen their tracks on the snow in September at an altitude of 8000 feet; this corresponds with Dr. Radde's statement, that he has met with them near the small Alous Lake at 7600 feet. Of course arrivals of German colonists, who in the winter go up to the sources of the Little Laba in order to cut down trees and float them down in spring, have forced the bisons to leave their former haunts, and to retire further and further up the valleys, where they are confined to a relatively small area. Some thirty years ago, as I was told by native hunters, the Aurochs used to be seen in herds of fifty or sixty head, but at the present time one seldom sees more than five or six together. Two

years ago, the Grand Duke's head keeper, who went to inspect their haunts, counted nine together. He told me they stood before him for some time, gazing at him without seeming at all frightened, and after a good three minutes' standing they turned round and walked slowly away. But, said he, "If they were to get your wind without seeing you, you would hear a tremendous crashing in the woods, and off they would start in a wild gallop."

Leopards (or "bars" as the natives call them) are supposed to trouble them a great deal, and I heard of a splendid group (I believe in the Museum at Tiflis), representing a fight between one of these animals and an Aurochs.

In summer and autumn the bison feed on grass, ferns, and on a small plant with very wide leaves that grows in the woods, known, I believe, as *Onoclea Struthiopteris*, Hoffm. I have found many tracks in places where this plant is common, and many leaves of it torn off by them; they are also fond of the bark of trees, especially birch.

Their favourite dwelling places are in the vicinity of salt springs, which are numerous on the slopes of the Kisha Valley, and are called by the natives *Solontchaki*, also highly esteemed by deer, ibex, and chamois.

Besides the Aurochs, one of the kings of these primitive forests is undoubtedly the grand *ollen*, or Caucasian stag. *Ollen* is the Russian name for any kind of stag, and not specially of the noble animal to which I allude. In fact, I think it does not differ from any Scotch or German stag, except in point of size, not only of body but also of antlers, which attain huge proportions. One of our trophies, a splendid twenty-one pointer, is, I presume, not far from being one of the largest heads on record. This animal was killed by the Grand Duke on the 13th of September, as it was sleeping, and I believe never woke again. I will give the measurements of this stag further on. It weighed $21\frac{1}{2}$ *pounds*, or 53 stone. I knew of the existence of numerous stags in this part of the country, and was very eager to secure a good specimen. Unluckily, fortune was against me, and it was only later on in the season at a deer drive in Borjom, the Grand Duke's residence at the south of the Caucasus, that I got a magnificent twelve-pointer, whereas I had been out many days stalking in the Kouban district, during the rutting time, without getting a single fair chance. The keepers told me it was a very bad year for them, the roaring having never reached its apogee, although from the 16th to the 27th of September the valleys resounded with



THE CAUCASIAN STAG.

their calls. I suppose that this was owing to the very hot weather and sudden change to cold, with heavy snowfalls about the 20th. The rutting time begins usually about the 10th of September, and is supposed to last nearly a month, but it greatly depends on the weather and other circumstances of which we know little.

The Caucasian stag is a most capricious animal; I have heard him roaring at our camp on the Kisha, and when we reached our next camp we did not hear a single call for three or four days, when they began again; and yet the temperature had not changed. I have noticed that the stags do not come down willingly to low ground in the rutting season, as for instance the Scotch stags do, but they stick to their favourite haunts on the high ridges, or just below them; and I believe that several of my stalks were unsuccessful owing to my approaching them from below instead of coming straight down from the top in the usual way. I thought it would make no difference in such dense forests if only the wind were in the right direction.

One of the most difficult matters is to locate the stag; and this struck me several times. I have often taken the greatest precaution in walking, thinking that the beast was close at hand, whereas he was

half a mile off, and it has also happened to me to hear a crashing in the wood quite near, when I had supposed that the deer was on the opposite bank of a ravine. The reason for this is, firstly, the echo is never the same in two places, owing to the different shapes of the hills; and secondly, the position of the stag while roaring. If he turns his head in your direction, you hear the sound much nearer than if turned the opposite way.

As to the classification of the Caucasian stag amongst his fellows of Europe and Asia, as well as the difference between him and his American cousin the Wapiti, opinions differ. Although I have no doubt that both in size of body and antlers he approaches the Wapiti, nevertheless I think he is more closely allied to the ordinary red deer, and especially to the Carpathian species. I quite agree with the statement that abundance of good food makes a great difference in size, but one must not forget that the climate and surroundings have their influence on his growth, and thus give him his local character. Indeed, I am sure that if closely examined, one would find slight differences between the Kouban stag and that of the Daghestan and southern Caucasus, either in the predominance of cups on the antlers, the colour of coat, or to some extent



THE IBEX OR TÎR.

divergence of habit. But there seems no reason to separate them as distinct species.

The Ibex or tîr (*Capra Caucasica*) was another great attraction to me in the district I was about to visit. So much has already been written about

this mountain goat, that I need not trouble the reader with an account of its ways and habits. I would merely draw attention to Mr. Lydekker's remarks on this animal in the second volume of the *Royal Natural History*. According to his scheme of classification there are three kinds of wild goat in the Caucasus, i.e., *Capra Caucasica*, *C. Pallasii*, and *C. Severtzovii*, the first named being found in the central Caucasus, between Elbruz and Daghestan, the second in the eastern Caucasus, and the third on the whole of the western range, which includes the entire district.

My experience of the country leads to other conclusions. Pallas's Tûr is indeed distributed over all the middle part of the Caucasus, and most frequently found on the slopes of the Kasbek, as well as in Svanetia. The western hills are inhabited by *Capra Caucasica*, hybrids between these two species are known, and I see no justification for regarding Severtzow's Tûr as a distinct species. Besides these, *Capra Ægagrus* (native *bezoar*) is found in Daghestan, and on the Turkish frontier on the Ararat range. These are the only three so-called species of wild goats I have ever heard of in the Caucasus.

Chamois abound in most parts of the Kouban district, and are far from shy. I had the luck to bag seven in one day. I have met with herds of

from seventy to one hundred at one time just above the timber line in September. When frightened they generally made for the woods, where I have very often found them in hot days lying in the shade. I have also come across Ibex hiding in the forest in the same month. The Caucasian Chamois does not differ in any way from the ordinary Tyrolian *Gemse*; difference of food has not produced the slightest difference in their horns, at least I have no reason to think so, having examined both.

Two different kinds of Bear are to be found in these regions, as throughout the whole Caucasus, viz., the common Brown Bear, which lives both on the high and low ground, and the Mountain Grey Bear, which prefers rocks at great altitudes. The former varies his coat according to the time of year from light brown with reddish tinge to dark brown approaching black; some, however, are darker than others. Although generally larger than their mountain kin, they seldom attain great weight in this country. One of those we bagged weighed nearly 9 *pounds*, i.e., about 18 stone, and was considered a large specimen. One of the keepers told me that a couple of months before we came he had spied out with his glass a "hay-stack" some miles away in a place where there was usually none, so he went to see

what it was. As he gradually approached, the stack began to move, and on getting still nearer he plainly distinguished a huge bear moving downwards the stream. He tried to stalk the beast, and



SILVER-GREY BEAR.

succeeded in getting up to about 300 yards from it, whence he judged it to be one of the largest he had ever seen, about 20 *pounds* (50 stone) weight! But this is quite an exception. Brown bears are very numerous in the Caucasian Mountains, wherever

there is timber. I have hardly ever been out of camp without seeing many tracks of Bruin. In late



BROWN BEAR.

autumn they come down from the hills to the vicinity of villages, where they can get fruit, and

a native told me he had killed one on a pear tree in his orchard some twenty years ago. This same man succeeded in bagging five bears in one day. The Grand Duke's keepers have strict orders now to treat these animals as vermin, but nevertheless they still swarm in and above the forests. The Grey Bear is smaller than the Brown Bear, and usually has a white collar. It lives among the high rocks, and seldom comes down to the low ground. Its snout is longer, and it is supposed to be more dangerous than its brown cousin. I tried one day to stalk one of these bears on the snow. The keeper who was with me said he would by no means approach him from below, for they are apt to make for you down hill; so we had to creep a long way round to get at him from above, although the wind was against us, and the stalk in consequence proved unsuccessful.

As already stated, Leopards have taken up their abode in the higher rocks, but can hardly be said to be numerous, although I have occasionally come across their droppings on high cliffs. They generally go out at night and wander in search of a Chamois, or anything else they can get. It is most difficult to keep them down by strychnine, for they very seldom feed on animals which they have not killed

themselves. Two years ago the keepers succeeded in poisoning two in one week, and their skins were sent to the St. Petersburg Museum. On September 17th, as we were crossing the Urushten stream on our way from one camp to another, we suddenly saw a hind going at full speed and a leopard following her at very close quarters. Being on horseback, it was impossible to get a shot, and both disappeared in the brushwood like lightning. This was the only glimpse I had of one. The keepers assert that they hardly ever see one within rifle range.

Lynxes, wolves, and foxes are also to be found in the country, the former being numerous. Game birds are likewise plentiful on the hills, the most interesting being the Snow Partridge and the Caucasian Blackcock. The Snow Partridge (*Megaloperdix Caucasica*), native *Gornaia Indeika*, i.e., mountain turkey, inhabits nearly the whole range of the Caucasus from the Black Sea to the Caspian, never leaving the high tops, where it shares its abode with eagles and ibex. What sportsman, when after three or four hours' hard work, on reaching the coveted ridge has not heard a shrill note somewhere near, and has not seen a covey of these splendid birds get up and disappear behind a rock? Their cry has always rejoiced my heart and raised my spirits, for I felt myself on Ibex ground,

and might at any moment spy out some fine old ram taking his siesta in a hollow.

There is a saying in the Caucasus that these birds warn the Tûrs of danger by their call; for my part I have always remarked the contrary, and they have constantly brought me luck.



THE SNOW PARTRIDGE.

I was very eager to secure a specimen or two, although I did not think it very likely, not having a shot-gun with me. Fortunately enough, one day as I was going back to camp I happened to come across a covey at very close quarters, and bagged a brace. Splendid birds they were, somewhat like large Ptarmigan; they did not appear at all frightened,

having given me time to get two shots, reload my rifle, and miss a third one before they flew off.

The other game bird which abounds in the Caucasus is the native Black-cock (*Tetrao Mlokotzievici*). It also lives among the rocks above the timber line, and in the rhododendron bushes, where I have often



THE CAUCASIAN BLACK-COCK.

found them in September. There is no doubt but that they go down into the woods in winter. I do not think they ever descend further than 4000 feet. In fact, it would seem that their habitat begins where that of the ordinary Black-cock ends. One of the chief peculiarities of this bird is that the

male becomes entirely black only in its third year. When one year old he resembles the hen; in his second year his feathers become dark, but with remains of grey patches here and there, whereas in the third year he becomes quite black without any white feathers in the tail. Another peculiarity of this bird is that, unlike his cousin, the ordinary Black-cock, whose cry is heard for miles, he calls faintly, jumping on the same spot, and stretching out his wings. I secured a brace of them one morning; striking up to the rocks where I knew they were to be found, in an hour's time I saw fully forty head, but the mist was so dense that it was most difficult to shoot, and out of a dozen cartridges only two were effective.

With these few preliminary remarks about the game which is to be found in the Kouban district, I will conclude with a short notice of the battery I took out with me on this expedition, as a hint to sportsmen who intend to shoot in the Caucasus.

Naturally one of the first conditions is to take out as little as possible, so as not to overload the pack-ponies with useless luggage. My battery consisted of a .500 express rifle, a .450, and a pair of Purdey's .303, which proved invaluable both at

short and long ranges. It was the first time I ever shot with a .303, and I am convinced that one cannot do better for Ibex, Chamois, and perhaps Stags, although at first I rather hesitated to shoot the latter with a rifle of so small a bore. I had the opportunity of noticing all the advantages of this rifle, such as comparative noiselessness, no recoil, flat trajectory, etc., and I have no doubt that it is the rifle of the future; the only disadvantage (and it is a fairly important one) is that the wounded animal sheds no blood with the small nickel-plated bullet, and several times I found the beast stone dead 200 or 300 yards off quite by chance, not having been able to follow its tracks by red-stained grass or stones. This is a serious drawback, one being so liable on this account to lose one's well-earned quarry; moreover, owing to its velocity and penetration the nickel-plated bullet is very apt to go through the animal, unless it strike a bone or some hard part, which will cause it to expand.

Quite recently I was shown an improvement in this respect, namely, four small vertical splits in the nickel, and although I have never used it, I have no doubt this would greatly facilitate the expansion. The powder I used was Rifleite. I

found that a pair of .303's was not too much, for it happened that one of them got injured; the extractor refused to work at a most critical moment. Luckily this happened towards the end of the day, though it was quite enough to make me lose a wounded Chamois. Of course, if I had not brought out a couple of these rifles I should have been in great distress. I had much more confidence in my .450 express, which was an old friend of mine, and I used generally to take it out for stags. The only shot I got with it, however, was a very difficult one, and resulted in a clean miss. I only once used my .500 express, and wounded a fine Stag with it at a long range; the beast went slowly down hill, and although it was followed by its blood tracks for a good two hours, I never succeeded in getting another shot.

Owing to rough mountain work, rifles are very apt to get damaged when one is crawling over rocks, and I shall never go out again without keeping mine in a good strong canvas cover until close to the shot. My .500 express must have had a most severe blow, for I discovered later that the sight had become displaced.

In conclusion I will quote the words of a well-known sportsman, who has travelled all over the

world, and whose experience in matters of sport is beyond question :—

“The Caucasus,” he says, “and especially the Kouban district, is the paradise of sport; variety and quantity of game, size of heads, lovely scenery—all that combined makes it the most delightful trip a sportsman can enjoy.”

CHAPTER II.

WE START FOR THE HILLS.

Our train stopped at Armavir on September 5th. The sun shone brightly that morning, and promised a splendid summer's day. Our hearts were beating quickly as we alighted from the car, and tried to catch the first glimpse of an outline of the hills we were going to explore, but they were as yet too far off, and we had to give it up. Crowds of people, in picturesque costume, were waiting on the platform of the station to get a look at the Grand Duke, and with their cheers, and the neighing of the horses ready to start, made a lively picture of our arrival.

Armavir is a dirty little village on the railway that joins Vladikavkaz to Rostov, about half-way between these two towns. It lies in the middle of that wide zone of steppes which stretch from the Don country to the Caucasian Mountains, rich steppes covered with corn, maize, and sunflower fields, with occasional long grass patches called *Burian* by the

natives, very useful for their cattle, which they turn out there in the spring. The inhabitants are mostly Cossacks, who are very well off, owing to the fertility of the soil, with a few Armenian merchants, shopkeepers and pawnbrokers. The last-named have entirely taken into their hands the local business and trade, which fairly explains the Russian proverb, "That a Jew outbargains two Russians, but that an Armenian equals three Jews." Sons of Israel have found their masters.

Our party consisted of the Grand Duke Sergius Mikhailovitch, Captain S., his father's *aide-de-camp*, Count C., and myself; the Government forest keeper, Mr. O., joined us at Psebai. Our baggage was soon put on to the carts, and we started in *troikas*, after a cup of coffee, which we hurriedly drank at the station, having to make about 100 miles to reach Psebai, the last village at the foot of the hills, and therefore having no time to lose, as we wished to get there before dark. An escort of about twenty to thirty Armenians mounted on ugly-looking, fierce little horses, and dressed in their national brown woollen gowns, followed behind the Grand Duke's carriage in a frantic gallop. It was, indeed, a curious sight to see these fellows standing in their stirrups riding furiously round the carriages, and

exciting their shaggy ponies along the broad dusty road that led through the grey oceanic-like steppes. Twenty good miles were covered in an hour and a half's time, when we reached the spot where our first relay of horses awaited us.

The Armenians bade us a loud farewell, and a fresh lot of mounted men, Cossacks this time, took their place; they were mostly soldiers and non-commissioned officers of the district. Their riding was undoubtedly better. They began the *djigitovka*, i.e., various tricks on horseback, throwing down their pocket-handkerchiefs or caps on the ground, and picking them up at full speed, hanging under the horse's belly with their heads between the animal's legs, etc. The sun was very hot, and clouds of dust hid the carriages from each other. After a second halt with a repetition of the proceedings, we at last came in sight of a huge village, stretching for many miles in front of us. This was the Labinskaia *stanitza* (village), about half-way, where luncheon had been prepared for us. It was one of the largest villages of the district, containing from 15 to 20,000 inhabitants. We entered it triumphantly; the square before the church was crowded with people; bells rang joyfully as we alighted. Before entering the house, according to an old Russian custom, bread and salt

were offered to the Grand Duke on a wooden plate, a few words of greeting being exchanged. The colonel commanding the place received us with the greatest hospitality, and gave us a most welcome luncheon. We had hardly finished when the signal for departure was given by the Grand Duke, and we were off again, galloping over the broad dusty road through the village, crowded with people dressed in their Sunday clothes, where red predominated, the church bells still ringing.

Meanwhile another escort of Cossacks joined the carriages, and, riding in front of us, greatly contributed to cover us all with dust, clouds of which rose from under the horses' feet. We soon crossed the Greater Laba on a primitive bridge; the stream below was very rapid, and now and then I could perceive pools suggestive of good trout fishing. Here I caught my first sight of the hills, far away yet, just a dark blue strip on the horizon, but rapidly increasing as we approached. Eighteen miles brought us to another *stanitza*, not so large as the one we had just left, but very densely populated. Again bread and salt were offered, and again crowds greeted us. Though I could not distinguish the mountains plainly, yet they attracted my attention far more than what was going on around me. Fresh horses were

put to our carriages in a few minutes, and we were off again, surrounded by new faces.

We were now following the valley of the Little Laba, with the first branching of the hills to our left, very low as yet, but rapidly increasing in height. The valley was wide, with villages here and there, plainly distinguishable by high poplar trees towering over the small whitewashed cottages. The country had lost its steppe-like character, and now showed signs of vegetation. Poplars and willows grew in the fields, and along the river-side shrubs and bushes were to be seen on both sides of the road.

The Grand Duke had to get out of his carriage two or three times, in order to meet people who had come from a neighbouring village with bread and salt. Our last halt was at a Cossack post, where we found a few Tcherkesses standing in single file and awaiting our arrival. One of them, a tall man with a grey beard, attracted my attention. I asked who he was. "Haven't you ever heard of Pago?" was the answer. "Why, that's he." He had taken part in the same expedition two years before, but declined to go this time, probably on account of his age. He had been a mighty mountaineer in his younger days, and had taken part in many a battle against the invading Russian army some thirty years ago. He

had defended his native land inch by inch with rifle and dagger.

I was told the following anecdote about him :—
When two years before he had joined the Grand Duke's expedition, Prince B. was one of the party. He was the grandson of the famous Prince Bariatinsky, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian troops during the Caucasian war. One day Pago was standing with young B. in a chamois drive, and the latter asked him how many Russians he thought he had killed? "Well," answered Pago after a pause, "Not more than fifty." "Ah!" said B., "Do you know that Prince Bariatinsky was my grandfather?" Old Pago stood up to his full height and instinctively grasped his knife, giving him such a fierce look that B. said afterwards he wished himself a long way off at that moment.

CHAPTER III.

OUR FIRST CAMP.

OUR journey was drawing to an end. The valley was growing narrower, the ridges of the hills on both sides becoming higher and higher. In front of us the masses grew darker and more compact, no more a vague outline, but a close reality. My companion, Count C., knew the place, having been there before with the Grand Duke, and pointed out to me one after the other the peaks which showed up against the dark blue sky like an irregular set of huge teeth, giving me at the same time their queer and unpronounceable names. The famous Ajij-Bok was one of them. It was a huge precipitous cliff, divided by a deep chasm called the Devil's Gate (*Tchortovy Vorota*). This curious piece of nature's architecture has, I am told, given rise to many a legend. It stood between our first two camps. The sun was going gradually down behind us as we finally turned the last corner, and half a mile in front of us appeared

the village of Psebai. I hardly think one could find a more perfect place for a settlement, surrounded as it is on all sides but one by precipitous hills; while on the remaining side to the west a plain stretches for a distance of about eight miles to the foot of the lofty mountains. This small plain with Psebai on it, the last one before the main range of the Caucasus, seemed to me like the floor of a box, of which the hills form the sides. Through it flows the Little Laba and the Psebaika, which falls into the former. The cottages appeared to be clean and tidy. They were distributed for a considerable distance among the fruit trees, and the rays of the evening sun made their white walls glisten amongst the bushes and leaves.

As we entered, the bells began to ring, and our first halt was at the church, where the village priest waited in full vestments to greet the Grand Duke and sing a "Te Deum." Not only was the small village church crowded, but the streets were swarming with people, who were trying to gain admission in order to get a look at the Grand Duke and his party. After the ceremony was over we made straight for the shooting-box, which lay in the midst of a garden. Here we found the Forester O. and General G. waiting for us. The former joined our expedition, while the latter had come from Maikop, as commander-in-chief of the troops in the district,



PREPARING FOR THE START.

in order to salute the Grand Duke. The keepers were likewise all present, and afforded us most promising news. The cook Simon prepared an excellent dinner, and General G. related to us how in 1891 he had met Mr. Littledale at Maikop, and gave us much valuable information on the country he knew so well. That night I slept badly, all kinds of wild beasts seemed

passing backwards and forwards before my eyes. The next day was spent at Psebai inspecting the horses and impedimenta. I rose early, and found the whole square filled with mounted Cossacks; the Grand Duke had ordered a review of the ponies, pack saddles, bridles, etc. As I stood watching, the precipitous Ajij-Bok caught my eye, and I took out my telescope in order to admire the lovely view in the distance. One of the keepers explained to me that we had to go behind the first ridge of hills, and that the peaks we could plainly see were to be crossed on our way from the first camp to the second. Here I made acquaintance with the keepers, who looked most of them well-trained, sturdy men, and naturally accustomed to hill life. They told me that game was plentiful, especially Chamois and Ibex. They were very anxious to start, and I felt myself closely examined as a newcomer, and probably quite ignorant of hard mountain work. Of course I knew they were born among the hills, and had not the slightest doubt about their climbing capabilities, but my first thought was that probably they might not be good stalkers, having heard that the previous shooting seasons had been exclusively devoted to "drives," which were mostly unsuccessful. In fact, *gais*, i.e. "drives," in the Caucasus were hitherto regarded as almost the only

way of killing mountain game, stalking being nearly unknown; hence my apprehensions. This year, however, *gais* were to be scarce, and we owed the whole bag to stalking, to which I believe the Grand Duke now intends to adhere.

The head keeper told us that there were numbers of Quail in the sunflower fields of the neighbourhood. In the afternoon we set out, my friend C. and I, with the intention of getting a few shots at them. In a couple of hours' time we had bagged about forty; they were so fat they could hardly fly.

We were in bed soon after dinner, the start having been decided for nine o'clock on the following morning. At six we were all on foot. I went out to see the ponies loaded, everybody working hard. Three Cossacks were appointed for my service, one named Baida, a smart-looking man, who proved very useful later, and two younger fellows. My pony was ready to start, saddled with a double-cushioned Caucasian saddle, looking very comfortable, but the pony of course was of the most importance. It belonged to Baida, who had lent it to the Grand Duke for the expedition, and a clever little animal it was. It never fell once during the whole trip, and heaven knows what difficulties it had to surmount. When everything was ready we mounted our thoroughbreds, and parted with General

G. The morning was beautiful, and the sun promised to be warm. At nine o'clock the whole caravan began to move towards the hills. It consisted of the Grand Duke's party, including myself, our servants—about thirty Cossacks—the keepers, and pack ponies, everybody on horseback with his gun in a sling, and the inseparable *bourka* behind the saddle; the *bourka* is a sheepskin gown, used by day as an overcoat and by night as a blanket; it is supposed to be very warm and waterproof, but for my part I could not take to it, owing to its stiffness and strong smell, which is said to keep off insects. It is the last thing a native of the Caucasus would part with, and to those who are accustomed to it no doubt it is exceedingly useful.

Our route lay for about eight miles across the corn and sunflower fields, where we had shot Quail the previous day. As we reached the foot of the hills the road began to ascend gradually, and the valley grew narrower. We soon found ourselves in a gorge, with the Little Laba flowing beneath us, and the woods on both sides became denser and denser. Hazel bushes, ash trees, aspens, and occasional very fine oaks bordered our way, and afforded cool shade. The road was a fine *chaussée*, which was said to have been made by the invading Russian troops during the Caucasian War; heavy artillery had probably passed there to

take up position on the heights and occupy the valleys, in order to prevent the warlike tribes from getting supplies from the plains.

Our first halt was at a saw-mill belonging to Slovak timber merchants who had settled in that lonely place years ago, and founded a colony. As winter sets in these men follow the river for many miles till they get to the larger woods, where they cut down the finest trees, floating them down to their settlement in spring and there converting them into planks. Methinks that this work has greatly interfered with sport at Umpyr, our last camp, for the traffic going on there in the winter is bound to drive the game further up, or, at any rate, make it exceedingly shy. These colonists spread flowers in our way, and all stood in a row as we passed, wishing us good luck. Before reaching a place called Tchernorechie, we left the main road, and, turning to a path on our right, we began to ascend a slope in the wood. The path was far from being an easy one for the horses ; it was very deep and craggy, and we had to make frequent halts to let the ponies rest. Here, for the first time, I was able to admire the wonderful strength of Caucasian vegetation ; we passed a forest of mighty oaks and splendid beech trees, such as I had never seen before. What struck me most was the huge circumference of their trunks,

which often measured from twelve to fifteen feet. As we got higher they became gradually scarcer, being replaced by birch, pine, and fir trees, the latter of



"THE PATH WAS FAR FROM
AN EASY ONE."

gigantic size. The grass was of unusual length, and umbelliferous plants covered us now and then, horses and all. The path we were toiling up was getting

steeper and steeper; it had been made by horses and cattle which had been brought up to the mountain pastures in summer, and only a few half-wild natives had probably ever used it.

We saw many tracks of Wild-boar, and the Grand Duke, who was in front, caught sight of one as it disappeared in the grass. During the first day I had full leisure for making more ample acquaintance with my Cossack Baida. I had only spoken a few words with him before our departure from Psebai, and thought I might now shorten the journey by a chat with him. I learnt from him that he had served in a regiment that had been quartered on the Austrian frontier; he was therefore more civilized than most of his native countrymen. He told me that he had several horses, of which mine was undoubtedly the best, and that it had even run in races. I must say that he was most careful over it, and kept watching attentively every step it took. I believe that if he could he would have carried it himself up difficult ravines. He had been on one of the Grand Duke's previous expeditions, and knew the country fairly well. I found afterwards that he was an invaluable help in real emergency. Soon after noon we got out of the woods. The monster-like pines and firs bade us farewell as we reached a plateau covered with grass and heather,

from which a lovely panorama lay before us. The rocky peaks which we had seen from Psebai stood opposite, and seemed so near that I thought I could stretch out my hands to touch them. The air was so clear that I could hardly believe that the deep Urushten valley intervened. The lower slopes were covered with fir trees, and so steep were they that the trees seemed to stand on the top of one another. On the other side of the defile rose a precipitous square cliff, forming a wide tableland on its top, with a curious rock of human shape beside it. This was the Djahalipsh. Many a legend has been related about this curious natural formation. Behind us were bare rocks, which were supposed to be very good for Ibex, to our right lay the plains we had left in the morning, with villages hidden from us by the dark blue mist, while in front of us stretched the grassy plateau on the border of which was to be pitched our first camp. Further on was a high ridge leading to Ajij-Bok and Bambak, our second camping-ground. Overhead soared three or four great Lammergeiers, as if expecting a feast. Presently we surmounted a boulder and came in sight of camp. Two pyramid-shaped plank huts stood on the edge of the tableland overlooking the hollow, at the bottom of which, a good mile below, roared an impetuous torrent.

Our cook Simon had preceded us, and a promising line of smoke reminded us that we had not had dinner.

We reached the place known as Kapoustina Balka (*balka* signifies a ravine) a little before two, and were glad to dismount, five hours on a Caucasian saddle making one feel it. The pack-ponies were not long in appearing, but unfortunately I could not make use of the few hours left of the daylight, for the ponies with my rifles had not yet arrived. So the Grand Duke and Captain S. started after dinner in different directions to try and stalk a Chamois. As for me, I made myself comfortable on the grass, enjoying the *dolce far niente*. A delicious *siesta* it was with the lovely scenery before me, full as I was of hopes for the morrow.

Towards evening our friends returned empty-handed. The Grand Duke had spied some chamois in the wood, but they were in an unstalkable position, and a long way below him, making a return to camp impossible before dark, so they were left undisturbed. Captain S. saw nothing. As night came on the temperature became fresher, and foreboded cold weather. At 8 p.m. it was at freezing-point; the stars shone bright and promised a bright day on the morrow; bonfires were lit, and we sat up late discussing our plans and warm-



THE DJAHALIPSH.

ing ourselves at the fire. I was too excited to sleep well that first night.

It was decided that we should start at 5 a.m. on the following morning, as we were to stalk on our way to Bambak, and perhaps have a "drive"

on the slopes of the Ajij-Bok; besides, the distance was not to be despised. Although I was up early, the cook and his ponies had already started. Everyone was busy preparing for the move, which took place as decided at 5 a.m. The weather was fresh, the sky cloudless. The path we had to follow led us at first along a ridge commanding the Urushten valley on one side, and wide-stretching plains far below us on the other. On our way we noticed pits which had been made some thirty years before by natives in search of iron ore, which was said to have been then plentiful. We ascended steep slopes covered with high mountain grass, splendid pastures for cattle, and I had the opportunity several times to notice the marvellous judgment of the Caucasian ponies. After three or four hours we got on to a ridge leading to the famous Ajij-Bok, or Devil's Gate, to which I have already referred. Here the Grand Duke intended to have a "chamois drive," as these animals were supposed to be numerous on the plateau above. But we had still a long ride to get there. As we proceeded I spied a herd of seven Chamois about half a mile off on the slopes to our right, and endeavoured to stalk them with my friend C., but unsuccessfully, our large caravan having been about two minutes in full sight of them. Half an hour later we saw them grazing quietly far

below us on the timber line, so we left them to their happy fate and continued our route, until about noon we reached the Ajij-Bok. Here we separated; the Grand Duke and C. posted themselves low down in a hollow under the rocks, while I attempted to stalk with the beaters, so as not to delay the "drive."

If the Chamois should catch sight of me, their only escape was towards the cliffs where the Grand Duke and C. lay concealed. I therefore toiled up the grassy slopes, and in an hour's time reached the plateau, on which I saw two or three groups of chamois. The place was indeed a most favourable one for them; good grass, fine rocks, and absolute quiet. On the far side of the high tableland I could distinguish five or six specks of human shape advancing towards us, and in a few minutes one herd after another got up, following their natural course towards the cliffs. In another moment they were all out of sight. I could only hear the rattling of stones and presently three distinct shots. None had come towards me. Then the beaters came up slowly, and we all descended the hill to find the Grand Duke and C. returning in our direction, with a couple of very fair Chamois carried by men behind.

The Grand Duke told me that he had seen about thirty Chamois coming straight towards him down a

narrow passage in the rocks, but that they had all turned away on hearing the first shot. This was our only successful drive during the whole trip, and I scarcely think that this mode of hunting will be continued. After this our only aim was to reach camp on the Bambak as quickly as possible, the day being well advanced and the journey long. We reached it very exhausted, after many ups and downs, at 6 p.m. We found a nice comfortable hut, which cheered our spirits, and the evening meal prepared, the cook having arrived a few hours before us. The camp commanded a lovely view of a large valley, with a fine range of hills on the opposite side, the highest of all being the so-called Abago, with its glacier streaming down its sides. The weather was splendid; the thermometer showed 5° below zero (Réaumur). The Grand Duke decided to have another "drive" on the following day at the Georgievsky Gai, a place that had been driven very unsuccessfully in previous years. This last attempt was to be decisive. The weather being fine we all started next morning at five on horseback. The way led through Alpine pastures towards grim-looking, craggy rocks, regular haunts of Tûr. It was a cold morning; the small mountain lakes we passed were frozen at the edges, and the more we ascended the lighter we felt. We spied on our way many a herd

of chamois. They did not seem at all frightened at our approach, but kept staring at us from a distance of about 300 yards. One thing that has always astonished me is the number, and above all the absolute tameness of chamois in the Caucasus, forming a striking contrast with their Tyrolian cousins. The beaters, a dozen of Cossacks, had started long before us, and were awaiting the signal to begin. We all alighted before reaching the rocky ridge along which were our stands, Count C. being first; about 200 yards off stood the Grand Duke, while Captain S. and I had to follow up the crags, and post ourselves on well-known passes for tûr.

After half an hour's acrobatic work I finally found myself on horseback upon the edge of a rock, with Baida behind me crouching in a most uncomfortable position. In front of us lay a huge corrie, 1500 feet deep, with slopes covered with rolling stones and occasional boulders, while on the opposite side rose a number of inaccessible rocky peaks, sharp pointed, and reminding one of what in Switzerland are called *aiguilles*.

As I was steadying my two rifles as best I could against a patch of grass to prevent scratching the barrels, my friend Baida suddenly gave me a jerk, and whispered, "Tûr, tûr," pointing eagerly to my

left. I looked in that direction, and saw a herd of female ibex working their way from the deadly circle in Indian file at no very great distance. They numbered twenty-two, and had probably been lying below us under shelter. As the breeze was far from being steady, they had undoubtedly got our wind, and were making off without delay. I watched them for some time, and eventually saw them disappear behind the crags. This seemed to me a bad foreboding for the coming "drive," since they must have disturbed other animals that might have been lying in the ravine. However, I waited patiently and motionless for a couple of hours. Now and then the report of a rifle reached my ear; evidently the beaters were endeavouring to frighten the animals towards us by letting off their guns. Then I saw five or six chamois rushing backwards and forwards in frantic despair at the bottom of the corrie, most of them breaking back and disappearing from sight, but nothing came within shot and no vestige of tûr. Presently, as the beaters drew near to the slope on which we were, I heard to my left a rattling of stones, and while waiting with beating heart the decisive moment, I perceived a young Chamois struggling up the hill with great signs of fatigue. Thinking this was my only chance, up went my

rifle instinctively, and the shot followed a second after; but it only served to give him more legs—"bang" again, and another miss. These were the only two shots fired during the "drive." When the beaters came up I heard from them that they had seen many chamois, a bear, and two magnificent stags; but the only animal that had confronted the guns was that wretched little chamois of mine. Down we went towards the ponies, where we found the party highly disappointed with the failure, more or less anticipated.

As it was only mid-day, I suggested that I should attempt a stalk further down the ridge, and accordingly started hopefully with a couple of men. The rest of the party separated in different directions. One of my companions, Kroutenko by name, was a nice-looking young fellow of twenty-three, and an intrepid hunter. I took a fancy to him at once. The Grand Duke having given strict orders to keep down Bears on his preserves, K. told me that he had already exterminated about 150 himself, which led me to suppose that he would some day hold the record. He had travelled a good deal in Siberia, where his father had been sent for some dark deed. On the whole he was a very jolly and willing companion, and the Grand Duke obliged me very much by allowing him to join my expedition to the Caucasus in the autumn of 1896.

The other man was a middle-aged, soldierly individual, by name Volossaty (which in Russian means hairy), and if not so keen a hunter, or even so experienced a stalker as his companion, he was full of energy and courage.

We followed the ridge where the guns had been hopelessly waiting during the drive, and keeping a little below the tops so as to avoid being seen on the sky line, we began to descend the other side with the greatest caution, stopping at times in order to survey carefully the surroundings with my telescope. For a good two hours nothing was to be seen, when suddenly a couple of brown specks, Tûr or Chamois, came into the field of my glass. They were lying a long way below on the timber line, and as I pointed them out to my companions, they both said, *Djeran*, which is their name for chamois, though it is properly the name for an antelope which lives in the Transcaucasian and Transcaspian plains. Knowing the meaning they attached to the word, I understood them, and seeing nothing else near us, we crept towards them like Red Indians on the war trail.

For a long time we were in full sight of them, but being above them we felt pretty safe. Finally we succeeded in getting behind some boulders, and hurried on till I thought it was advisable to leave the men and

proceed alone. Creeping cautiously up the slope again and looking over the ridge, I saw a fine old buck lying in the sun, about 120 yards off, and taking a careful aim, rolled him over. On hearing the shot, up sprang another, which, pausing for a moment to look round, also received his death-blow. I could hear him tumbling over the rocks, making desperate efforts to get on his feet, and lost him after all, for he had fallen into a deep chasm beyond reach. While making my way towards the place where my first buck lay, the two hunters came up, and one of them suddenly pointed out another Chamois—this time a young one, standing on a rock just above us, examining our proceedings. So down he came, sharing the fate of his two friends. Unloading my rifle, I was about to help the men to gralloch the beasts, when, to my amazement, a fine old Tûr jumped out of his hiding-place, not more than fifty yards from us, and rushed downhill. But the time I took in picking up my rifle and slipping in a cartridge meant another 150 yards for the Ibex, which, of course, I missed clean. This fact shows plainly how confident the Tûr is in its ability to conceal itself. The day was fast advancing, and it was only after 4 p.m. that we were ready to return. We had a good five miles before us in order to reach the place where Baida was to wait for us with

the ponies, and many ridges to leave behind us. This part of the day seemed most exhausting to us, the heat being very trying, and worst of all there was no water to be found anywhere. Volossaty kept saying that dry throats can do no good work, and I myself thought so too, as I looked at my empty flask. However, driven by necessity as we were, we at last sighted a small stream trickling down a corrie, and hurried on with renewed spirits. I think I hardly ever enjoyed a drink so much as I did that one. Thence we followed a small path on the hillside, generally known by the hunters as Djebensouk's path. Djebensouk was a renowned brigand who not so long ago infested the country, making raids upon the villages below, and when pressed hard, took up his abode in mountain caves, known only to himself. We reached the ponies by sunset.

The faithful Baida was anxiously awaiting us, and came to meet us with unconcealed signs of joy, and, best of all, with his horse—a far more important item to me. So leaving the men to load the remaining ponies with our well-earned spoil, I at once started for camp with Baida. On reaching the top of the hill and looking back, we saw one of the ponies galloping frantically in our direction, after having energetically refused to have anything to do with the chamois skins ;

he passed us at full-speed, and we found him an hour later in camp. Count C. had killed a Bear, and the Grand Duke had missed a Chamois.

The result of the day, although not brilliant, was sufficient to cheer us up. In the midst of our evening meal a hunter came in with the unwelcome news that the weather was breaking up, and that thick dark clouds obscured the sky. We therefore decided to start early the following morning for the next camp, which was to be pitched at a place called Tchelipsi, about ten miles distant, in order not to waste a day's shooting.

CHAPTER IV.

EN ROUTE FOR TCHELIPSI.

WE were all up at 6 a.m. ready for the start, but the rain was so heavy that we had to wait another two hours, when taking advantage of a momentary brightening up, we moved camp at 9 a.m. But the west wind, which never fails to bring wet weather in this part of the Caucasus, blew hard the whole day, and it never ceased pouring till we reached Tchelipsi at 3 p.m., literally drenched through. The hills had disappeared from view, clad as they were in thick mountain fog. On our way I had further opportunities for noting the wonderful strength of Caucasian vegetation. Our path led through dense fir woods with trees of unusual height and diameter, and fine glades covered with tall grass and gigantic parasol-like *Umbelliferæ*, hiding us, horses and all. We discovered numerous tracks of stags, for which game the country seemed a perfect El Dorado.

It was indeed a welcome sight when on leaving the

woods we beheld just above the timber line the hospitable hut of Tchelipsi. From our shelter we kept scanning the hopeless sky, but shower succeeded shower, until at last it grew colder, and the thermometer fell to freezing point. Towards evening the clouds grew lighter, and we caught glimpses of the surrounding hills, which were freshly powdered with snow.

The next day, the weather being dull, the Grand Duke decided to have a "drive" on the Petrovsky Gai for stags, and perhaps for aurochs. So we started rather late, the beaters having to go a long way, and soon spotted a large herd of Chamois, which on seeing us dashed into the wood below. They had probably been driven down from higher ground by the storm. At 11 a.m. we were at our respective stands in the forest, but after a fairly long wait the men came up to say that they had seen fresh tracks of half a dozen aurochs, which had gone off perhaps half an hour before. This was a great disappointment to us all, but on the other hand it showed that bison were plentiful in these parts. The sun having now and then given proofs of its presence, I thought I might usefully employ the few remaining hours of the day in attempting a stalk, but luck was decidedly against me. On reaching the rocks, after a hard climb, for the grass was

very slippery, a tremendous snow-storm came on which lasted all the afternoon, and compelled us to make our way back to camp, which we reached duly soaked. The only thing we had seen were fresh bear tracks.

At 9 p.m. the thermometer stood at 6° (Réaumur) below zero.

Next day, September 12th, we moved this unlucky camp. The weather seeming to clear up, we all started by different ways in the direction of the Kisha river, where our next halting-place was to be, in a very wild bit of country, which was supposed to be the regular haunt of aurochs, deer, and tûr. My way, though the shortest, led over the highest rocks and difficult passes, so that I started as early as possible. The sun shone brightly as, with Kroutenko and another hunter, I began to ascend the steep slopes of the "Pagovsky Gai," another of the many unsuccessful beats for Tûr. The summits of the hills were covered by a dim haze, while the valleys below were filled with what looked like streams of cotton wool. Soon after quitting the shelter of a boulder where we had halted, I spied a fine herd of tûr feeding on the Alpine pastures a couple of miles in front of us. Having decided upon the best mode of approaching them, we started, keeping in the same line, well above them. But the rocks were very slippery, and we found it very hard work till we

reached a sort of plateau where we stopped to rest, and noted the direction in which the animals were feeding. I could see them now plainly with my glass. There were seven of them, three of which carried good heads, the other four being smaller and lighter in colour. They were quietly feeding upwards towards the rocks, where they probably intended to repose during the heat of the day. Now and then one of them would lie down, when another would come up, and giving him a prod with his horns make him get up. As time was pressing, and all around seemed pretty safe, we proceeded with the intention of cutting off their retreat to the rocks. The wind was steady, and everything appeared to favour our enterprise, when suddenly, on looking at them once more to make sure that they were undisturbed, one of the smaller ones gave signs of uneasiness, and in a few seconds they were all on the move towards higher ground. This appeared to us inexplicable, but when Kroutenko caught me by the sleeve and pointed downwards all was explained. There, within a mile below us, were our wretched pack-horses quietly making their way to our next camp! Fortune was indeed jeering at us. However, we picked ourselves up, and seeing that it was too late to cut off the tûr from the rocks, we decided to follow them.

Keeping well out of sight, we made straight for the

crag. Patches of snow here and there showed where the animals had passed. In order to move as noiselessly as possible, I left my two men behind, telling them to come up after the first shot, though I very much doubted whether I should get one at all. Up I toiled across a steep snow-slide which showed fresh tracks. Luckily I could perceive no jumps, a sure sign that they had not been too much disturbed. Reaching in this way a small ridge commanding a wide, stony corrie, I saw, about 300 yards off as it seemed to me, the three larger Tûr standing like sentinels on the snow. Down I crouched, and putting up the 200 yards sight I fired at the one which seemed to carry the best head; but he did not move, while the other two rushed up the side of the ravine. Taking a finer sight, again I fired, and this time he staggered a few yards and fell heavily to the ground.

When I ran up to him he was already dead. My first bullet had bored a hole through the very tip of one of his horns, and had probably stunned him, which explains his not moving; my second bullet had lodged in his lungs. The distance was 234 yards. As I stood I took the following measurements:—Length of horns $34\frac{1}{2}$ inches, girth 12 inches, span $21\frac{1}{2}$ inches. He was a heavy beast of about



"I FIRED AT THE ONE WHICH SEEMED
TO CARRY THE BEST HEAD."

15 stone weight. When the hunters came up we waited awhile, watching the other two animals which had already nearly reached the topmost ridge, and after standing for a time on the sky line, disappeared from view.

By the rattling of stones we discovered a herd of females also making for the heights. It was about two when we had done gralloching the Tûr, and leaving him there we started home. On our way a couple of Chamois bucks fell to my rifle, and I missed another out of a herd of fifteen. Towards 6 p.m. we at last found the ponies at the foot of a hill, with Baida fast asleep. An hour later we

CHAPTER V.

A FRESH START.

NEXT morning, on awakening, I found the weather quite settled again, and not a cloud on the dark blue Caucasian sky.

We all started at dawn in different directions, the Grand Duke striking down into the woods towards the salt licks, where the hunters thought there might be a good chance for Aurochs, while I tried the higher ground with prospect of Tûr or Chamois. My faithful Ermolenko and Baida with the ponies formed our small shooting party. An hour after leaving camp we dismounted and began ascending a steep slope towards a ridge whence we could command a wide stretch of country on either side. We had no sooner reached it than we at once spied a small herd of Tûr with a good shootable buck amongst them, some half a mile down a grassy ravine. Further on, in the distance, we perceived some moving specks, which proved later on to be a herd of some fifteen chamois. Taking, however,

no heed of these for the present, we directed all our attention to the more important quarry, and the wind being steady we made for the ibex, which were quietly enjoying their breakfast without suspicion of impending danger. It was unfortunately rolling ground, and afforded little or no shelter—now and then a useful hollow or small boulder; but on the whole the stalking was very difficult, and we found ourselves several times in a very awkward position, in full sight of the animals. They still continued to feed, but, as I noticed, were raising their heads at short intervals, evidently feeling the approach of an unknown foe. At last, as we had reached a knoll about 300 yards from the spot where they were grazing, they suddenly started downwards at an easy trot, the old buck leading the way, and gradually disappeared. This was a bad beginning for so bright a day, but as it was still early, we held counsel and decided to stalk the herd of Chamois which we had discovered some time before. Here the ground seemed more favourable, and we succeeded in getting within 100 yards of them without any risk of being seen. There appeared to be one or two old bucks amongst them, so picking out the one that I thought was the finest, I rolled him over, and, reloading, succeeded in getting two more shots as they stopped about fifty

yards further on, hearing Ermolenko's shrill whistle; another one tumbled over, and a third was wounded before they were out of range. As soon as they had disappeared, we rushed towards the wounded one, for he still kept moving slowly on, and I had to finish him at close quarters.

They all proved to have fair heads, and Ermolenko remarked that the day might not be so unsuccessful after all. It was now only 9 a.m., so having left the three Chamois duly gralloched, we hurried on to the next ridge, a very craggy ibex-looking wall, where we hoped to find our old friends, the Tûrs, concealed during the heat of the day. But our lot evidently fell on chamois, for as soon as we peeped over the top of the rocks my hunter caught me by the sleeve and pointed out two Chamois standing motionless a hundred yards below us, just as we see them in illustrations; their four feet close together on a tiny ledge, and their heads bent forward staring intently into the precipice; this was indeed a fine picture. I lost no time, however, in admiration, bloodthirsty as I was, and quickly knocked one of them over, whilst the other, curiously enough, did not move, and also got his death-blow. We could see their bodies rolling down and bumping against the rocks till they reached the very bottom. We had to make a small *détour*, and found one of

them, a female, with every bone smashed and the horns broken to pieces. As for the other, for some time we could find no traces of it anywhere, until Ermolenko caught sight of it hanging on a protruding angle of rock, where any attempt to secure it would have proved useless.

We left this inhospitable place and began scrambling up the face of the rock in order to get back to our old ridge, from which I thought we might find undisturbed ground for the evening stalk. After an hour's hard climb under a scorching sun, we reached our destination, and sat down for a rest. We spied many miles of country round us, but saw nothing. At 2 p.m. we started again, striking downwards towards the timber line, where I thought we might have a good chance of coming across game, perhaps stags, lying in the shade. For a long time our glasses revealed no signs of life. My hunter was beginning to talk of returning to camp, when a herd of eight Chamois came into view, some 500 yards in front of us. They were evidently working upwards for their evening meal, and had probably been lying in the woods. We immediately girded our loins and began the stalk, time being precious. The ground was easy. Stumps of trees and crooked, awkward-shaped, monster-like pines afforded hiding here and there. Now and

then we stopped to draw breath and watch the movements of the Chamois. Presently they went down into a small ravine, so taking this opportunity for hurrying on, we soon found ourselves at the spot where they had disappeared. On creeping noiselessly down the slope I caught sight of a pair of horns, then of another, and of a third, not more than sixty yards below me. Crouching down, I took a steady aim, and brought one of them to ground, then standing up I wounded a second as they were galloping off in frantic disorder; a few other shots did not tell. Sending my hunter down to finish the wounded one, I sat down to watch his proceedings. Bang went his rifle, and again a shot, but the beast still moved on, until finally I saw him roll over. In the meanwhile I found myself in a cloud of mosquitoes and gnats, which had evidently selected me for their evening meal. I had no cigarettes left, and never was so tortured in my life, for there was no way of getting rid of them. I began lighting fusees one after the other, but even that failed to temper their fury. At last I rushed off in despair, and was rewarded by finding my two good bucks, making with the others a score of seven head for that day.

The return journey was very tiring, for we were a long way from the ponies. On my way back I



"GALLOPING OFF IN FRANTIC DISORDER."

secured a couple of Snow Partridges out of a covey. They did not seem to mind the shots, and kept running about the rocks a few yards from me. Baida was in high spirits, and related to me how he had sold a horse of his for the enormous sum of 190 roubles (£19) to a rich Armenian some weeks ago.

He also asked me if, after such a good day's shooting, I would not purchase his horse which I was using. I refused, however, but gave him three roubles in remembrance of the day's sport.

We reached camp at 9 p.m. The Grand Duke had been also very successful. Though he had not come across bison, he had found a Stag asleep at twenty yards, and of course killed him on the spot. He carried the finest head I had ever seen, a twenty-one pointer with the following measurements: span 42 in., girth 8 in., length of horn 45 in., length of brow antlers each 21 in. The weight of the beast was above fifty-two stone. Mr. O. came in at 1 a.m. with a capital fourteen-pointer. The others had been unsuccessful.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SOURCES OF THE KISHA.

ON the following day, September 14th, the weather being cloudless, I started with my two favourite hunters towards the sources of the Kisha river as early as possible, our ground lying about eight miles from camp. Aurochs were said to frequent those remote parts of the valley, and my hopes were great at the idea of bringing back the coveted trophy of a fine old bull.

A light morning haze crowned the tops of the opposite hills as we mounted our ponies and bade farewell, or rather *weidmansheil*, to the other shooting parties. We journeyed along at a fair pace over steep grassy slopes, and soon entered the woods, making our way through the dense bushes, and over half-rotten stumps of formerly magnificent pines. The path grew gradually more and more difficult as we ascended the other side towards a fork made by the river separating into two rapid streams.

On our way we came across the stag killed on the previous day by the Grand Duke. 'T was a grand old beast, and his antlers from afar seemed a regular bush. I thought at that moment that fortune was blind indeed, for who could say he had secured such an animal, finding him asleep a few yards off?

On leaving him, we soon found ourselves in the midst of a glade, where the path, if path it might be called, ended, and we dismounted, leaving Baida to his usual twelve hours' happy slumber. Presently our difficulties began.

Our way towards the "Solontchakis," the renowned salt licks, lay across the so-called "Aspidnaia Gora," which means in Russian the slate hill, and smooth it was as well as steep, consisting entirely of bare rocky ground, sloping at a very acute angle to the bottom of the valley. There was no foothold anywhere, and shooting-boots with nails meant a dangerous slide into the unknown, so taking them off, I slipped on a pair of lawn-tennis shoes with thick india-rubber soles; but even this did not help much, and I was several times compelled to invoke the aid of my two hunters, who eventually got me over, after a couple of hours' hard fagging.

On reaching the other side we proceeded carefully among the trees, but, to our great disappointment, for

a long time saw nothing save old tracks of aurochs and stags, which denoted at any rate that this part of the country was not devoid of game.



"FINDING HIM ASLEEP A FEW YARDS OFF."

At 11 a.m. we reached the timber line, and as I felt very hot and exhausted, I suggested to Ermolenko to go on and spy the ground over the next ridge,

while I made a short halt, and examined the opposite ravines. He started accordingly as keen as ever, and we watched him for some time climbing among the rhododendron bushes. My second hunter, who had remained beside me, suddenly whispered in my ear the magic word *ollen*, and on looking in the direction he was pointing to, there I saw a magnificent 14, perhaps 16 pointer, trotting quietly downhill towards us. He had most likely been disturbed from his afternoon siesta by my friend Ermolenko, who had now disappeared. In a second I had grasped my .500 express, and crouching as low as possible, waited for the animal to approach. Unhappily, when at 200 yards from us, he suddenly turned and went straight downhill. Seeing that I could not get a closer shot, I steadily took aim and fired. He stumbled over, but soon recovering himself, slowly continued. My hunter, who was watching his movements closely with the glass, said I had wounded him in the shoulder, and we both rushed in the direction he had taken, but, alas! we were too late. By the time we had reached the place where he had been struck by my bullet, he was already in the woods. For a couple of hours we followed him by the blood-tracks, but he still kept on, and we were compelled to give it up. Thoroughly disgusted with our want of success, we were making

slowly back up the precipitous bank, when the loud roar of a stag made my heart leap.

It was now nearly 4 p.m., and I had to hasten if I meant to seize this opportunity. The sounds came from a deep ravine, densely covered with pines, about half a mile in the direction of camp. The wind appeared to be steady, so I started with renewed spirits. The calls, followed by repeated grunts, seemed to come nearer and nearer as I advanced. Leaving my hunter behind, I scrambled up to a small ridge overlooking the coveted corrie, and creeping stealthily on, got to within 200 yards of the animal. Evidently nothing had disturbed him, for he continued a series of low grunts until I was quite close to him. Unfortunately the spot where I had located him was a patch of small dense bushes, mostly mountain ash, on the very timber line, and it seemed impossible to get nearer without exciting his suspicions. Moreover, I feared I should not catch sight of him until I was on him; but time was passing, and permitted of no delay. So on I crept as cautiously as I could, when suddenly the call ceased. I waited motionless, for I must have been within thirty yards of him. Half an hour passed thus—it seemed a century to me—and yet nothing indicated the animal's presence. At length I decided to advance towards the spot where

I had heard him last, and to my great disgust, what did I see but my two hunters standing on a rock about 200 yards off, making signs to me that the beast was far away.

When they arrived they told me that they had seen the stag come out of the brushwood as stealthily as could be, with his horns laid well against his back, and when at a certain distance, he galloped quietly off. This was, indeed, an unlucky day for me, and sad was the return journey, dangerous too, for it was growing dark. We had great trouble in finding our ponies, and when we did find them, no slight danger was it to grope our way back to camp on horseback in the dark.

We caught sight of the camp fires at 10 p.m., and never was I so glad to find myself safe again.

Captain S. had killed an Aurochs. Great were the rejoicings in camp, for this was the first bison killed by one of the Grand Duke's party since he had taken these Caucasian shooting grounds, about ten years ago. The main difficulty had been to get to the Kisha valley, which was one of the wildest and most inhospitable of all the surroundings. Mr. St. George Littledale had managed some years before to scramble in, but through countless hardships; in fact, I believe he had to cut his way through the virgin woods for some miles before pitching camp

on the opposite banks of the deep aurochs-haunted ravine.

Captain S. related to us how he had come across a small herd of these animals, consisting of a bull,



"HIS HORNS LAID WELL AGAINST HIS BACK."

three cows, and two calves. They did not seem frightened at his approach, and he had got his shot at relatively close quarters. He had fired at the one that seemed the largest, and was obliged to put in

several shots before bringing it down. It happened to be a cow. Her measurements were the following:—

Horns.—Length of right horn, 15 in., left, 17 in.; circumference at base, 7 in.; greatest span, $10\frac{1}{2}$ in.; from tip to tip, $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. *Body.*—Length from snout to end of tail bone, 10 ft. 1 in.; height from shoulder to end of fore hoof, 5 ft. 3 in.; girth round waist, 6 ft. 9 in.; of leg above knee, 18 in.; of leg below knee, 9 in.

The weight was about 30 *pounds*, which is equivalent to 900 lbs.

According to Russian Game Laws, shooting Bison is entirely prohibited throughout the empire. The Grand Duke has to get special permission from His Majesty every time he sets out, and I believe that three is now the limit allowed.

We sat late that night talking over the day's events, and after turning in we all dreamt of the mighty inhabitants of those forests, and the chance we might each have of securing one; but nothing could have made me believe, even in a dream, what the following day was to bring forth.

Early next morning the Grand Duke started off with a couple of hunters in search of Aurochs. Two men went out on the doubtful errand of finding my wounded stag. Captain S. directed his steps towards

the dead Bison, in order to superintend the skinning and careful collection of the bones, which were intended for the St. Petersburg Museum. As for Count C. and myself, we struck down to the river with our fishing-rods, taking also one of my rifles, in case of meeting with some stray animal.

I find a day's rest now and then absolutely necessary. I was tired out and somewhat disgusted by the previous day's failure, and had I tried hunting I should have spoiled precious hunting ground. It was a bright sunny day, with prospects of good sport. I had never tried fly-fishing in this part of the Caucasus before, but trout being plentiful, we had no doubt but that we would bring back a basketful for dinner. The descent through the woods was long and steep; the night's rest had refreshed our spirits.

On our way we found numerous tracks of Stags and Aurochs. Towards noon we reached the river-bed, and soon found that uncivilized trout rise at any time of day to any kind of fly; no special skill in casting is required; as soon as they see the fly, up they come from under the stones with the greatest voracity.

At 2 p.m., after a quiet luncheon on the grass, we were engaged in hauling out half-pounders one after the other, when suddenly one of the men, who was

behind me, caught me by the arm, thus making me lose a larger fish than we had hitherto taken, and whispered, pointing to my left, the unusual word *zubr* (bison). I immediately caught sight of a grand old beast coming stealthily out of the bushes on the other side of the stream not more than 100 yards off, and approaching us, evidently, as I thought, for an afternoon drink. I grasped my rifle as cautiously as I could, dropping my fishing-rod, which floated down stream; but at that moment my mind was elsewhere. The movement I made to reach my rifle did not pass unnoticed, for we were in full view of the bison, which turned quickly to the right and disappeared in the brushwood before I had time to fire.

The torrent was deep and cold, but there was no time for reflection, and I dashed across it, the water coming up first to my knees, then to my waist, next nearly up to my armpits, so that I had to keep the rifle straight up in the air to prevent it from getting wet. The stones were exceedingly slippery, but nothing on earth could have stopped me at that moment. In a few seconds I was safe on the other side, when to my great surprise I heard a shot, followed by another, in the direction in which the Bison had disappeared. On reaching the scene of

action I caught sight of the animal stumbling over stumps of trees, and trying to make his way through the dense underwood. Lowering my rifle and aiming at his huge head, I fired both barrels at him. As he



"WE WERE IN FULL VIEW
OF THE BISON."

was down, but still breathing hard, I gave him a third bullet. At that moment one of the men who had gone out with the Grand Duke came rushing down and gave me an explanation of the shots I had heard, and of what had occurred. The Grand Duke, he said, had come across a herd of Bison in the woods, and had wounded two of them. He had

gone himself in pursuit of one, while my informant had followed the other, which had come down to the very place where we were fishing, and now lay dead before us. He was a mighty old fellow, though, as the hunters seemed to think, not one of the largest. The Grand Duke soon came up, having heard the shots. He had had to give up the chase of the other animal, but was delighted to see that one of them at least had been stopped. It was indeed a most extraordinary circumstance that this bison should have come across the exact spot where Count C. and I were fishing. Had he chosen any other part of the river he would have quietly crossed it, and would probably have never been heard of again. As it was, fortune had smiled on us, and the return to camp was a joyful one. It was the only trophy of the day. My Stag had not been found; his numerous blood-tracks had led the men down to the river-bed and up again the other side; the odds were that if he had gone uphill he might continue to go far, and they had to give it up.

The following morning, September 16th, I made an early start with my two favourite hunters, Ermolenko and Kroutenko, towards the timber line of the hills opposite our camp. The Grand Duke went in search of the wounded bison, whilst O. and the

Doctor remained behind to fish; the others spread out in different directions. Having reached the woods on the other side, we halted to listen if stags were calling, but to my disappointment we heard nothing but the hollow roaring of the impetuous stream below us. The weather was beautiful, the glass high, and the sun hot at 9 a.m., so we had the right to expect a fine long day. Continuing our ascent, we soon found ourselves above the woods, commanding lovely scenery. Before us was a wide rocky corrie, with patches of snow here and there in the small ravines, and, towering high above it, rose several ice-clad peaks in a faint blue mist. Two or three small turquoise-coloured lakes glittered like diamonds in the distance, and as I was spying, my telescope suddenly revealed a black speck and two smaller ones just on the edge of one of the lakes about three-quarters of a mile off. The hunter said it was a she-Bear with two cubs. Seeing no other signs of life around us, we decided to attempt the stalk. A long circuit was made in order to get against the wind; as for the rocks, they afforded us good shelter. For a couple of hours we kept out of sight of the animals, and as we looked over a boulder to see once more the place where we had marked them, we saw them a little higher quietly playing on the snow. A few

more yards' steep crawling out of sight brought me to within easy range of them ; but unluckily the wind had become shifty during the last part of the stalk, and as I peeped over the decisive ridge, it was only to see the three specks far above me on the snow slopes making hurriedly for the lowest saddle of the ridge. This was indeed a discomfiture. We sat down to rest, for I was somewhat blown, and the sun was exceedingly trying.

My hunter's wonderful eyesight soon discovered a herd of about thirty-five Chamois to leeward, so we started in that direction. On our way a fine old buck sprang out of the rocks in front of us, and, giving his well-known whistle, halted some 250 yards above, staring at us with great curiosity. I decided to take my chance and fired, missing him clean ; he did not move, however, and two more shots brought him down. I found him to be one of the largest chamois I had ever seen, and felt content with the prize. We saw nothing more that day, although the air was exceedingly clear and we could distinguish objects at great distances. After no slight trouble, about 6 p.m. we reached the place where Baida was fast asleep by his ponies, and got back to camp at eight. O. had succeeded in killing a Wild-boar while crossing the bed of the stream. Captain S. had

missed a Bear at long range, and secured a Chamois. The Grand Duke had not been able to find his wounded Bison; though blood was plentiful, the tracks led into difficult ground, and the chase had to be abandoned.



THE SENTINEL CHAMOIS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VALLEY OF THE URUSHTEN.

THE hunters had told us that stags were most probably calling better at Mastakan, a place about twelve miles distant, where our next camp was to be pitched, and it was accordingly decided that we should start on the following morning, shooting on our way, so as not to waste a whole day. The weather was still fine and settled. One of the Cossacks who was regularly sent every week from the village of Psebai with the post had not turned up for several days, and it was feared that he might have lost his way in the woods. The Grand Duke had sent a couple of men in search of him. News reached us now that he had at last been found in a starving condition in an out-of-the-way valley.

On the following morning everybody was ready to start at 6 a.m. It promised to be a glorious day, and I thought it a pity to waste it on the march. Camp was struck, however, and we began ascending the slope

to our left, leaving the happy valley of the Kisha and a country where wild animals are seldom disturbed by man.

On reaching the "divide" separating our old grounds from the valley of the Urushten, an impetuous stream flowing eastwards into the Little Laba river, we descended along a winding path into the woods, and in a couple of hours reached a place where we could ford the river in order to follow its course on the opposite bank. The Grand Duke was in front with his two hunters; next came Baida and myself on our thoroughbreds; Captain S. and Count C. were close behind.

At the very moment when I was in the middle of the torrent, there suddenly came a rustle from the bushes to our left, and out dashed a hind as hard as she could lay legs to the ground, closely followed up by what seemed to me a huge spotted cat with an extremely long tail. The hunters shouted out *bars*, which means Leopard, and we all hurriedly unslung our rifles. Before we had time to dismount, however, both animals had disappeared. The Grand Duke immediately sent some men round to try and drive them back, but it was of no avail, and we continued our journey interrupted by this unexpected event.

This was the first time I had seen a Leopard in these parts, although I had several times heard of them from the hunters, who had never succeeded in shooting one. Some years ago two Leopards had been poisoned within



"OUT DASHED A HIND, FOLLOWED BY A HUGE SPOTTED CAT."

a week's time by strychnine laid for that purpose in boar's flesh, and placed in a likely spot for them; but it is rarely that they feed on animals which they have not killed themselves. They hardly ever come out in the middle of the day, but lie hidden amongst rocks, in recesses known only to themselves. I have

often seen their droppings about, but this was the first time I had actually come across one.

This curious episode was the topic of our conversation until the Grand Duke left our caravan with the



THE SNOW LEOPARD.

intention of shooting his way back to camp. He was to visit the so-called "Berezovoi Gai," a favourite place for stags. We were to follow on straight to Mastakan, and if time allowed, to spread out in different directions from camp.

On our way Baida, pointing to fields covered with long grass, through which we were passing, drew my attention to corn which grew here and there in wild condition. These, he said, were remnants of ancient Tcherkesse crops. Mohammedan tribes used to inhabit these valleys in days gone by before the Russian Conquest, and the only trace we found of their former existence was this semi-wild cereal. Villages disappear, but nature remains. These people, after having defended their native haunts foot by foot, had not surrendered, but had returned to their religious brethren, seeking shelter under Turkish dominion.

We caught sight of the Mastakan hut towards noon. It is situated in the middle of a long sloping glade, at a place where the ground is naturally levelled, some little way below the timber line. On its right the Alous woody hills run for a good many miles westward, whilst opposite rises the lofty Atchipsta Peak, forming one of the links of the main Caucasian Range. Behind the camp to the south stood the Yatir - Varta, separating us from the lowlands, and descending gradually towards the plain. Clouds were now gathering fast, and no time was to be lost if I wished to try my luck that day. The Alous Range was allotted to me, and I started with two hunters up the grassy slope in order to follow the top ridge

as noiselessly as possible among the woods, this being a favourite resort for stags. In some of the passes large lumps of salt had been placed, and many tracks were visible around them, but not a call was to be heard. We pursued our way in this manner for a couple of hours, walking very slowly amongst the pines and holding our breath occasionally in eager expectation. Unfortunately a dense mist, foreboding change of weather, soon enveloped us entirely. We had to grope our way with great care, but found it impossible to avoid treading on dry branches, and thus disturbing any animal that might be lying within hearing range. Towards evening, as we were following a track half-way down a ravine, something sprang up to my left, but I saw nothing. My hunters said it must have been a Stag. A little further on we heard a slight attempt at a roar above us, but after two or three grunts the roars ceased, and, though we waited fully an hour, were not repeated. At 5 p.m. I decided to work back to camp, which I reached rather exhausted after this fierce scramble through the woods. The Grand Duke had killed a Stag on the other side of the valley. It was a fine twenty-pointer, though not approaching in beauty the one first obtained.

I turned in that evening as early as possible in order to be fresh for the morrow, when I was to try

the valleys eastward of our camp. The weather seemed unsettled, though the mist was clearing away fast. I started early the next morning in the direction of the grounds allotted to me. The dense mist was still clinging on to the mountain-sides as we began ascending a steep slope covered with long grass and dried *Umbelliferae*. It was exceedingly wet and slippery. When, after an hour's climb, we reached the top we were as drenched as if we had been the whole time under pouring rain. The sun, however, soon showed signs of its presence, and hopes of a fine day raised our spirits.

We were now above the timber line, commanding a view of several parallel valleys, the huge rocky wall to our left still enveloped in the morning fog, which was melting fast under the sun's rays. My hunter led the way straight towards the rocks, which I saw ended abruptly and continued again some fifty yards further, thus forming a natural gigantic gateway, from where we should be enabled to spy the corrie on the other side. When we reached this opening a huge amphitheatre of granite boulders lay before us. Seating myself down and getting out my glasses, I soon discovered a fine old Tûr climbing the rocks on the opposite slope of the wide ravine. The hunter said that he was then utterly unstalkable, and if we

waited awhile he might shift to better ground. But this apparently was not his intention, for, after having gone a certain distance, he stood motionless on the same spot, and our keen desire to see him move did not magnetize him enough to make him proceed further, so we turned our attention in other directions, though without success. Excepting a small herd of Chamois in the distance, there was no sign of life. The latter now seemed to me unworthy trophies, and my ambition had altered its standard.

We had just decided to leave the Tûr for a while and to try the back valleys, when my hunter pointed out a mass of rock overlooking a deep precipice behind us, and there, about 500 yards distant, I distinguished a light brown speck which made my heart beat. Putting up my telescope, I saw this was a Tûr lying on a ledge of rock in full view, and it was likely that others might be beneath him.

Making ourselves as small as we could, we started in the direction of a line of boulders whence I thought we might approach under shelter. At present we were slowly advancing in a crouching position, there being no means of hiding just around us, and apparently we should have to go on in full sight of the animal for a good half-hour before we could reach the broken ground. To my surprise the

Tûr gave no signs of uneasiness before we found ourselves safely at our destination. We could now move on in perfect security, the wind giving no trouble. They had already marked the place where I had intended to take my shot, when on looking once more I saw the beast hurriedly get up and dart down the rocks out of view. With a glance I silently consulted my experienced hunter, thinking that we had been detected. He did not take much notice of my disappointment, but nodded in a peculiar manner, as if to imply that it was all the better. I understood that the Tûr had probably sought a more shady resting-place, since the sun had become exceedingly hot. I accordingly started again, though in a doubtful state of mind, and presently found myself on the edge of the abyss, peering down in every corner, but in vain. There were no signs of my Ibex. The man had left me and gone further to my right, in order to leave no part of the place unexplored. For some time I crept stealthily along the ledges of rocks, and was just intending to give up my search, when the hunter beckoned to me to come as quickly as I could, and as I reached him he pointed out to me, about 100 yards below us, several Tûr lying in the hollows amongst the rocks. I tried a shot, but the bullet whizzed just over the animal's back. Several others

jumped out of their hiding-places, and a second shot hurled one of them into space. Two more bullets did not find their mark, and the herd disappeared round a sharp corner.

I felt very much disgusted at my first miss, but found an excuse for the awkward position in which I was placed, the shot being nearly perpendicular, and my hunter had to grip the end of my jacket, fearing I might tumble over. One beast, however, had been secured, and a difficult job indeed it was to find him. We eventually managed to scramble down to where he lay at the very



bottom of the valley; both his horns were entirely broken off, and his body was a shapeless mass of flesh. As we had now disturbed the neighbourhood, we decided to go over into another valley, with hopes of hearing a stag call. It was a hard climb up to the next ridge. We waited there a couple of hours, but heard nothing, and finally started back for camp, which we reached late in the evening. A dense mist had set in again, and prospects of sport for the following day seemed doubtful. The Grand Duke had killed a fair-sized Bear, whilst O. had brought back a couple of Chamois. Count C. had wounded a Stag, which had not been found. The hunters seemed to think that this daily mist was a sure sign of the breaking-up of the weather, and the advent of autumn showers. Next day, however, was not so bad as might have been expected. I made an early start with my friends Ermolenko, Baida, and the ponies towards the opposite side of the main valley. My shooting grounds for that day were to be the corries round the Atchipsta Peak, where Tûr were said to be plentiful. Captain S. went to the "Berezovoi Gai," a favourite haunt of stags, whilst the Grand Duke tried the rocks behind camp.

At 5 a.m. we had all mounted our steeds. My way lay along the crest of a small wooded ridge

leading towards the stream, and ending abruptly in order to let the torrent pass, then beginning again and gradually ascending above the timber line on the further side, thus forming one of the precipitous rocky walls separating the numerous sweeping corries around the main mountain, and leading straight up to the summit, where it lost itself in the heights. It was a hard trial for the ponies this scramble through the forest amongst huge trunks of trees lying on the ground, without any paths save the indistinct tracks of passing animals. We advanced thus in Indian file, crouching at every moment over our saddles in order to avoid the branches which came whizzing back just over one's head from the horseman in front. At one time I got jammed in between two trees, the opening being so narrow that I could neither go backwards nor forwards. We proceeded in this manner for nearly three hours, and finally left the ponies to Baida's care, further advance on horseback becoming dangerous. It was not before 10 a.m. that we reached the open stretches of likely-looking ground for tûr, and sat down to spy. But the huge corrie seemed devoid of animal life. In the middle of it was a lovely little lake glittering in the sun, and curiously enough the rocks around it also shone brightly: we afterwards found they were all

covered with crystal prisms. Ermolenko suggested that we might try the next corrie. Another hour up a steep rhododendron slope (slippery work it was) brought us to the top of the dividing ridge. It was now nearly mid-day; the Tûr, if there were any, had undoubtedly lain down for their usual siesta, and our hopes for the day's sport were decreasing fast, when my hunter's sharp sight discovered something moving slightly in a hollow half a mile away towards the base of the hill in the corrie we had so carefully surveyed an hour before. I put my glass up in that direction, but too late, for the animal had just disappeared; we decided, however, to take the chance without hesitation, and started forthwith. Besides, we could rely on the fact that if nothing came out of the hollow the beast, whatever it was, must have stopped in it. There was a long patch of snow just above the place where Ermolenko had seen him last, so that it was easily marked in case we were long out of sight of it; and so it happened. For a long time we made our way towards the rocks, and at last reached a small plateau about 200 yards from the coveted stretch of snow. Here I stopped to take breath. I had depended entirely on Ermolenko's wonderful eyesight, but having myself seen nothing, I felt rather sceptical as to the issue



“FINISHED HIM AT CLOSE QUARTERS.”

of the stalk we had undertaken. Moreover, there was great probability that the animal had gone unnoticed, for as we came up we found plenty of ravines which might have afforded him shelter, and which we had not been able to see from afar. Redoubling my precautions, I now crept on alone, and, to my great amazement, there came in sight first one, then two other Tûr lying on a moraine some eighty yards below.

Taking my time, I steadily lowered my rifle and

fired at the nearest one; he dropped his head to the shot, while the other two sprang up. Instantly I fired my left barrel, and was pleased to see the second one tumble over. The third luckily gave me time to reload, for he stopped about 150 yards to my left, and I fired two more shots at him, breaking his hind leg. He stumbled down hill, so I rushed in his direction, the other two giving no further signs of life. I eventually finished him off some 500 yards below, and sat down to enjoy my success.

Presently Ermolenko came up; he told me that after my shots he had spotted a herd of Chamois making for the neighbouring corrie, and said that we might try them on our way back to camp. Leaving the three animals duly gralloched, we started off again towards the place where the chamois had last been seen. It was a long, steep ascent, and I was fairly out of breath when we came in sight of the adjacent valley. We soon discovered the herd, consisting of eighteen Chamois, playing on the snow and entirely unsuspecting of danger. A deep, narrow ravine separated us, with a long stretch of snow at the bottom, which gave us some difficulty in crossing, the heat of the day having considerably softened it, causing it to give way under our weight; here and there I sank into it up to my waist, and if it had not been

for the precious help which was shown to me by my hunting friend, I should have probably gone through the icy snow into the icy ford below. We, however, eventually got over this bad crossing, and another half-hour brought us to the top of the opposite bank, whence I thought I might get my shot. Unhappily the animals had shifted, and we found them again about 500 yards further on. Another small ravine had to be crossed, but this time without any trouble, the snow having entirely melted. When I crawled up the succeeding ridge the beast was still within long range, but I decided to take my chance, and as I fired, after a steady aim at a fine dark-coated old buck, they all spread out like lightning in different directions; three or four more shots were of no avail, but my first one had luckily told, for my Chamois, after 100 yards' run, fell dead.

There was nothing more to be done there, so after the usual operation of gralloching we struck down to the woods, hoping to hear a call, but for some unknown reason stags would not roar. There could be no doubt of their presence, one out of every ten trees being stripped of its bark by their mighty antlers; but the season was probably unfavourable, the sun too hot or the moon too bright, as natives often say—he it what it may, there was evidently

something wrong, for the hunters kept saying that at that time of year all the surrounding valleys usually resound with their calls, and that this year was a mysterious exception. We found Baida and the ponies an hour after half-way downhill, and I felt quite relieved on mounting my horse, for I had had two consecutive hard days. Baida kept throwing his cap up in the air in frantic joy on hearing of our success, and our return journey proved shorter than we had expected.

The Grand Duke appeared in camp almost at the same time, with a couple of Bear skins. He had killed one of the beasts at a distance of 400 yards with his Russian military carbine; the other, a small Grey Mountain Bear, had afforded him a perpendicular downhill shot while the animal was enjoying a dip in the stream, but he never moved after the shot. The Grand Duke, thinking that Bruin was too busy drinking, had fired again with the same result. The beast had dropped into the water stone dead from the first bullet, which had broken its spine. Captain S. and the forester had been unlucky in their stalks, and had brought back nothing. Thus ended my last successful day of the season. The remaining week proved to be a series of failures, partly owing to my own fault, partly to the weather breaking up soon afterwards.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR LAST CAMP.

NEXT day, September 20th, brought a sunny morning. Being overworked by previous hardships, we all remained in camp to rest. As we sat at the door of the hut spying the opposite hills, we discovered a she-Bear playing with her two cubs on the snow. Towards 11 a.m. heavy clouds began to appear behind the main range, and the glass was falling fast. After luncheon we all went up the Yatyr-Varta, a hill to the back of our camp, whence a lovely view extended on all sides for miles. But we soon found ourselves enveloped in a damp fog, very dense at first, and gradually turning to rain. Someone had lent me a twelve-bore shot-gun, with which I bagged a couple of Caucasian Black-cock (*Tetrao Mlokochevitchi*). These birds were numerous among the rocks, and I fired about a dozen cartridges to secure the two I bagged. The mist was so thick that they were exceedingly hard to see. I have already alluded to the peculiarities

of these birds; in winter they live in the woods just below the timber line, where, like their European cousins, they bury themselves in the snow. I do not think they ever descend lower than 4000 feet.

I was back in camp early in the afternoon, and found my three Tûr, which had just been brought in. One of them, curiously enough, had both his horns entirely broken off about three inches from the base, and naturally knobbed at the tips. I presume that when young he must have had a bad fall, which occasioned this abnormality. A Chamois wounded on the previous day by the Grand Duke had also been found and brought to camp.

On the following morning, the famous "Berezovoi Gai" being allotted to me, I made an early start with the intention of trying my luck with stags. Ermolenko seemed to cherish great hopes, although the weather was cloudy, and the wind apparently shifty. Captain S. directed his steps to a place called "Meshok," which in Russian means "bag." It was rather an out-of-the-way *cul-de-sac*, where stags frequented the salt licks. Our companion was to sleep out and meet us at the next and last camp, for which we were to start on the morrow. The "Berezovoi Gai," literally "the Ash-beat," which I was to visit that day, was, as I have said before, one of the favourite abodes

of the great Caucasian stag. This curious name had been given to the place from the fact that it was formerly the practice to "drive" the deer, and the



А. В. (1891)

SHE-BEAR WITH TWO CUBS PLAYING ON THE SNOW.

timber there chiefly consisted of mountain ash, interspersed with nice shady glades. These were covered with long healthy grass, where tracks of stags were everywhere to be seen. After a couple of hours' riding we dismounted before reaching likely ground,

and soon found ourselves on the edge of the timber. Advancing as cautiously as possible, we kept peering through the trees into the numerous open glades below us, but for a long time unsuccessfully; no calls were to be heard anywhere. At a sharp corner Ermolenko, who was just behind me, suddenly pointed to my left and whispered the word *ollen*. I immediately descried a fine pair of antlers towering above the grass about one hundred yards below us. To my dismay it was hopeless to shoot from where I stood, shrubs of every description being in the way. I decided, therefore, to creep a little further, hoping to find an open space for my bullet, but before I could get a fair sight of the animal he jumped up and darted downhill. I fired hurriedly, time not allowing a steady aim, and then rushed as fast as I could in the direction he had taken, but I was destined never to see him again. There were no signs of blood anywhere, and further pursuit was useless. I suppose the stag had got a whiff of my wind, for he could never have heard me at that distance. The disappointment was great, especially as this was my only chance, and a poor one. Although I felt low enough, I had no reason to abandon hope, so we proceeded on our way for some hours. Now and then low repeated grunts could be heard at a distance,

but they did not last long enough to enable us to attempt to stalk. Towards evening, as we were on our return journey, a louder call from below roused me for a while, and an approach was tried. But here again the wind shifted awkwardly for us, and a dismal silence was re-established in the woods. On reaching camp, I found that neither the Grand Duke nor O. had met with any luck. This day's failure confirmed our previous decision to leave Mastakan for the Umpyr hut on the following morning. We started accordingly at 6 a.m. under the auspices of a bright sunny day; the thermometer was at freezing-point. The distance between the two camps was not great; the path led straight down the valley, which we followed the whole way till we reached at 10 a.m. the junction of the Umpyr and Lesser Laba streams. Here among the pines we found a wide glade sheltered on all sides by almost perpendicular rocks, especially craggy down the Laba river, which flowed through narrow gorges known as the "Balkans," an emphatic term or expression for difficult passes. This was to be our camp, and a small wooden hut in the middle was destined to be our *palazzo* for the next few days.

We were now about 5000 ft. above sea-level, and consequently about 3000 ft. lower than our last camping ground. The sun being very warm, we

decided to lunch out of doors, and to start afterwards for an evening's stalk. Towards mid-day clouds began to appear from the west. The Grand Duke and I soon were off in different directions with our respective hunters, but hardly had we gone out before rain began to pour, a regular Caucasian autumn rain, which usually lasts until November. My men seemed to think that no good could be done under these circumstances, and we returned to camp thoroughly drenched. As for the Grand Duke he was more persevering, and came back at 8 p.m., having secured a magnificent fourteen-pointer. He had again managed to approach within a few yards of a recumbent stag. He had heard calls now and then, but hardly enough for a successful approach.

Next morning at 7 a.m. the rain had not stopped, but it was fast growing cold, and at nine heavy snow came down, falling without interruption the whole day. There was nothing to be done. Nearly a foot of snow lay all round our hut, so we waited till evening, when all hopes for that day were abandoned.

On the following morning, September 23rd, the weather seemed to brighten up. Snow had ceased falling, and at 11 a.m. there was a general thaw. I started with a couple of hunters towards noon with the intention of following up the left bank of the



JUNCTION OF THE UMPYR AND LESSER LABA STREAMS.

Umpyr stream. But we only heard one stag calling during the whole afternoon, and even this one did not allow us sufficient time to approach him. The walking was very difficult along the steep, wooded

slopes. Moreover the melting snow came falling from every branch in heavy drops, with the result of soaking us through, and making such a noise that nothing could be heard beyond one hundred yards.

Everybody was back early in the evening empty-handed. I had seen plenty of tracks of deer and boar, and if the weather had only held up for another week the place might have yielded us good sport. Captain S. had just returned from the Meshok, where he had met with similar ill-luck, and prospects were altogether gloomy.

On September 25th, we found to our amazement on awakening that the weather had settled again. I consequently made an early start with my hunter, Ermolenko, with the intention of making a desperate attempt. "Now or never," thought I as I left camp, but the "never" eventually prevailed. The snow had almost entirely disappeared from the bottoms of the valleys, leaving the trees lightly powdered to the tops.

We slowly made our way along the left side of the Umpyr, but instead of ascending the bank straight from camp, we followed the stream for a considerable distance, and then struck uphill at a right angle, with the view of reaching a low ridge commanding several likely ravines. The way was long, but the wind was

not so cold as on previous days, and we were presently rewarded by hearing a call about 500 or 600 yards ahead of us. Before we had time to get within range the stag ceased his challenge, and although we waited his good pleasure for half an hour, he would on no account betray his whereabouts. We pursued our way in the direction of the sound, and although we followed his tracks for a couple of hours, struggling through brushwood and knee-deep in snow, we found this of no avail, for the wind shifted every moment.

Ermolenko suggested that we should now make for the wooded ridge half a mile above us, and wait there to listen carefully to the calls on either side. After a hard climb we reached the summit, and soon heard two stags roaring at the bottom of a ravine some 400 yards below us on the opposite bank of a small tributary of the Umpyr. Again we seemed to have a chance, and again arose a difficulty almost impossible to avoid. The snow at this altitude was hard as ice, and cracked under our feet, thus making a noiseless approach impossible. I did succeed, however, in getting within one hundred yards of the beast which, from his deep voice, appeared to be the older of the two, and this without arousing suspicion on his part, for grunt followed grunt in a most pleasing manner. The underwood was thick in this part of the forest, and I had just taken off my

boots in order to continue the stalk, when the animal for some unknown reason ceased calling. This was indeed bad luck. I crept down, however, as noiselessly as I could, thinking I might catch sight of a mighty pair of antlers between the trees, but again I was doomed to be disappointed, for when I reached the coveted spot no stag was to be found. As for the tracks, they were scarcely visible on the hardened snow.

At this moment we heard more calls to our right, and started only in time to hear them cease. Stags that day simply vanished like ghosts, leaving hardly any tracks behind them. It was now 4 p.m., and consequently growing dark, so we were compelled to leave the woods. Just as we reached the path along the Umpyr stream, a series of loud calls coming from the place we had just left resounded through the valley, but it was too late, and I got back to camp towards 7 p.m. thoroughly disheartened. The Grand Duke had in some way missed a fine old stag, while O. had secured a good royal.

On the following morning the temperature freshened, and the thermometer showed 4 deg. below zero (Réaumur). In the afternoon every one went out for a last try at Stags; I remained in camp, feeling unwell.

At 8 p.m. they were all back. The Grand Duke had been within fifty yards of a roaring Stag without being able to get a shot, owing to the dense mist; the forester came in with the head of a twelve-pointer. He had gone to the left side of the Umpyr, where I had been so unsuccessful on the previous day, and reported that the stags seemed only to call on the very top ridges, not from the valleys.

On the 27th it was decided to attempt a last drive along the so-called "Sergiefsky Gai" before the return journey to Psebai, which was to take place on the next day. Accordingly we all started for our respective stands, and after riding for a couple of hours, took up our positions on the summit of a "divide," the beaters having been sent on early in the morning.

At 2 p.m. all was over. Captain S., who was next to me on my right, secured a small ten-pointer. For my part, I saw nothing. The weather was bright, but exceedingly cold. When the beaters came up they reported that they had seen on the snow fresh tracks of several stags, but, as was to be expected, the cunning old patriarchs broke back.

After the drive I started off for a final attempt, but neither saw nor heard anything until late in the evening, when I decided to give it up. The animals of the Umpyr valley had evidently been scared by our

long presence in the neighbourhood, and absolutely refused to betray themselves.

On the morning of September 28th, at 8 a.m., our caravan began to advance slowly down the Lesser Laba valley in the direction of Psebai, which we reached late in the evening, after a thirty-five mile march, and on the following day we bade good-bye to the happy hunting grounds of the Kouban district.



HEAD OF CAPRA CAUCASICA.

SECOND HUNTING EXPEDITION

IN THE

Valley of the Araxes

BY DR. H. D. LEVICK.

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE VOYAGE.

IN the beginning of 1896 I was introduced to Prince Demidoff, with a view to accompanying him during the summer months on a shooting expedition as medical officer.

He proposed going to the Caucasus, chiefly after Ibex and other wild goats, and gave me an outline of where he thought of trying for them.

His plan of campaign, so far as it could be formulated at so early a date, was to send the baggage to Tiflis in the spring, and to join it in June; from there we were to go south to Erivan, and try the districts on the Armenian and Persian frontiers.

The Alagueuz and Lesser Ararat mountains, and

the valley of the Araxes, he mentioned as probable and likely ground where Ibex (*Capra Ægagrus*) and Moufflon (*Ovis Gmelini*) were to be found. We were then to return to Tiflis and from there cross the main range to the north, and spend a month or six weeks in the Kouban district at the sources of the Kouban river, there being here every prospect of finding *Capra Caucasica*, the finest species of goat peculiar to the Caucasus, and the Caucasian Stag, which also takes the premier position amongst its kind on account of its magnificently developed antlers.

Although the arrangements were preliminary and subject to alterations according to the information which might be received in the Caucasus as to the amount of game seen by the native hunters of the various districts, yet D.'s knowledge from previous experience in these regions was such that his original plan was very little altered by subsequent or local information.

Early in the spring the baggage, consisting of tents, provisions, etc., to the weight of about a ton and a half, was sent by boat to Batoum, and thence to Tiflis, and it was arranged that I should join D. there early in July.

Tiflis can be reached in about a week, if despatch be necessary, by rail to Constantinople or Odessa, by

boat to Batoum, and thence by rail ; or again, by rail to Vladikavkas, *viâ* Moscow, and thence by posting over the main range of the Caucasus by the Great Georgian road. If, on the other hand, time is of no great importance and ship life agreeable, a fortnight may be spent between Marseilles and Batoum. I decided to take the longer sea route, and availed myself of the fortnightly service of boats which the Messageries Maritime Company run between Marseilles and Batoum.

On the morning of the 26th of June, accompanied by a Scottish stalker, Gregor Grant by name, I left Victoria, and travelling *viâ* Paris reached Marseilles the following morning.

One of Cook's men met the train, and finding we were travelling with their tickets, advised us where to breakfast, and saw our luggage safely deposited on board s.s. *La Gardiana*, advertised to leave that afternoon, and arrive at Batoum on July the 9th.

Though the Messageries Maritimes Company use only their older and smaller boats, chiefly suited for cargo, on the Black Sea service, *La Gardiana* had comfortable accommodation for about thirty passengers, and an efficient and obliging staff of attendants. Our fellow-passengers consisted chiefly of Greeks and Armenians, with a sprinkling of most of other nation-

alities. The only other representatives of England besides myself were two English ladies going to Constantinople to join friends at the British Consulate.

Time slipped by in that placid fashion peculiar to ship life, one day resembling another in that it was



RUINS, ATHENS.

chiefly passed in eating and sleeping and dreaming away the hours as our vessel lazily ploughed its way through the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Only once was this *dolce far niente* existence interrupted by an attempt at an impromptu concert, remarkable more for its Pentecostal nature than for the quality of musical talent exhibited ; after hearing nearly every

language presented to us in the form of song, the climax was reached when Gregor Grant warbled us a love song in Gaelic.

The Piræus was the first port we touched at, and as we were to stay four or five hours, we decided



THE ACROPOLIS, ATHENS.

to form a small party and visit Athens. As soon as our boat dropped anchor about a hundred yards from the quay, we were boarded by a number of interpreters and guides, one of whom simply insisted on taking charge of our party. Not availing ourselves of the half-hourly train service, we drove the five or

six miles to Athens. The road passed through a parched and barren-looking country, glimpses of which were only to be had through the clouds of dust that accompanied us. At Athens most of our time was



GREEK IN NATIVE COSTUME.

devoted to the ruins contained in the Acropolis, and, after a hasty visit to the Stadium and a hasty look at the town, we were compelled to hurry back to the port and our ship.

The city is particularly clean and pleasant for the East, and can boast of a remarkably large number of really handsome residences.

One could not wish for a more delightful place than Athens in which to spend the winter.

Leaving the Piræus, we made our way across the Ægean Sea, and arrived at Smyrna the following day.

We stayed a sufficiently long time here to allow a visit to the bazaars, where, in this commercial arena, not only does Greek meet Greek, but also his Jewish and still more formidable Armenian opponent. From my limited knowledge of the business capabilities of

these various gentlemen, I think there is some truth in the old saying, which implies that in any transaction a Greek can get the better of it over two Jews, whilst an Armenian can give points to all three combined.



ON THE QUAY, SMYRNA.

CHAPTER II.

CONSTANTINOPLE.

HAVING left Smyrna, we threaded our way north, between the islands of the Ægean Sea, to the Dardanelles. As we slowly steamed up, the numerous batteries, with their sullen-looking cannon frowning down on us from the heights on either side, made me glad that our vessel was not a warship trying to run the gauntlet of their cannonade. To one ignorant of naval matters it would appear that these Straits could be converted into such a trap, that little less than a miracle would be needed to save from destruction a squadron which had forced its way up any distance. We fortunately got up the Dardanelles just before sunset; had we arrived after, we should have been compelled to wait until daybreak before receiving permission from the authorities to proceed on our way; as it was, we were visited without delay, and, receiving *pratique*, were allowed to pass out of the Straits into the Sea of Marmora and on to

Constantinople. Early the following morning we were lying off the Golden Horn.

Constantinople, as seen from the water with the first rays of sun playing on its marble palaces and the gilded minarets of its numerous mosques, is a sight once seen never to be forgotten.

Soon after our vessel had taken up its berth alongside the quay, I accompanied my English fellow-passengers to the British Consulate, and was put in the hands of a trustworthy adviser as to where to go and what to see. My guide, philosopher, and friend was a Greek, and although his knowledge of English was exceedingly limited, and his phrases were considerably involved, he turned out a very satisfactory fellow. We made our way to the Galata Bridge, which crosses the Horn, and connects Galata, the European and commercial part of Constantinople, with Stamboul, the native part.

The Golden Horn is the estuary of a river which, though comparatively small, has the fine-sounding name of "The Sweet Waters of Europe." This estuary, which extends up from the Lower Bosphorus for about five miles, and varies in width from a quarter to half a mile, has received the epithet "Golden," so the guide informed me, from the fact that in the earlier days most of the wealthy merchants took up their

residence on its shores ; but now, no longer patronized by the better classes, who have migrated to the more fashionable Pera, and the delightful villas stretching along either side of the Bosphorus, the impression one receives is that commerce and the struggle for existence have taken up their abode where wealth, luxury, and ease once reigned supreme.

From the Galata Bridge boats run regularly and frequently up and down both the "Horn" and the Bosphorus, calling at the numerous landing-stages on either side. The boats are very similar to those one sees on the Thames between London Bridge and Kew Gardens, with, of course, the striking exception that the Turkish women are jealously curtained off.

For a small sum we were taken by one of the boats to the upper end of the Horn, where the Imperial Mosque is situated. We passed on our way a handsome block of buildings belonging to the Turkish naval authorities, off which was anchored quite a fleet of Turkish warships, which, to the casual observer, had the appearance of considerable efficiency.

The Imperial Mosque is a majestic building, almost hidden by trees, until closely approached. Here the Sultans are crowned, and in due course laid to rest. We were not allowed to go inside, and the guide informed me that only quite recently had it become

safe for Europeans to be seen in the neighbourhood, the quarter being exclusively Turkish. The great national cemetery of the Turks is in the same locality, in which the many acres of tombstones



INTERIOR OF ST. SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE.

present a remarkable appearance. Shown one of the water supplies of the city, I was particularly impressed with the modern arrangements and quality of the water—a condition of affairs very different from what one might expect to find so far east.

The remains of the old city walls attracted our attention. There are two, one inside the other, and

each surrounded by a moat of considerable depth. Decayed as they are now, one is still able to understand the length of time the Greeks were successful in keeping out the Turks in bygone days. On the remains of the ramparts are the ruins of two palaces, one being described as the residence of Belisarius, the famous Greek general, and the other of Constantine the Great.

We now passed through the Jewish and Greek quarters, and though they were free from any obvious disturbances just then, the guide pointed out from time to time nails over various doors upon which Armenians had been hanged a few days previously.

The bazaars were less busy than usual, as the Turkish element was absent keeping their sabbath. The embroidery claimed special attention, owing to the fine quality of the silks used, and their rich and varied colouring. The dealers ask fabulous prices for their articles, and when one declines to buy and departs, they follow, very importunately pressing their goods at a rapidly diminishing value. Dogs in large numbers, all apparently ownerless, are to be seen lying about in every street. These mangy pariahs have to thank the Turkish belief in their sacredness for their undisturbed possession of the main thoroughfares.

The guide pointed out some houses which had been extensively damaged by the earthquake with which Constantinople was visited not long ago, and judging by the dismantled appearance of these buildings, it may be safely conjectured that the "internal" troubles of Turkey are not merely political. Constantinople is a highly devotional city, if the many mosques and the hardly less numerous Greek and other places of worship seen everywhere form any criterion. Moslem priests, wearing their distinctive turbans, and ecclesiastics of the Greek Church, with their long hair, unshorn beards, and hats peculiar to their office, form a large percentage of the men one usually meets. A large, disused old reservoir, said to contain one thousand and one columns, now dry and partly filled up, shows that engineering during the Greek occupation was of no mean order. It is the only one remaining of seven reservoirs, built to hold seven years' storage of water, in the event of the Turks investing the city and cutting off its supply from without.

The friends made on board ship invited me to spend the day with them at their residence on the south shore of the Bosphorus; their kindness thus enabled me to see something of this most delightful suburb of Constantinople. Both shores are fringed

with handsome villas, while here and there the marble palaces, reserved for the Sultan's guests, lend quite a regal picturesqueness to the scene. Many of the more modern houses stand some distance from the shore, and have grounds stretching down to the water's edge, while a number of the older dwellings actually overhang the rippling waters. We arranged a rowing expedition in a *caïque*, a vessel now familiar to most people, since Constantinople visited Olympia. The rapidity of the stream was quite surprising, and indeed in one part we had to be towed some little distance. We explored a wretched little stream, which in contradistinction to the "Sweet Waters of Europe" is called "The Sweet Waters of Asia"; it was so shallow that we could only proceed about two miles, and was crowded with *caïques* and other pleasure boats. One boat which we passed several times was rowed by lackeys in gorgeous livery, and contained four Turkish ladies said to be the wives, or some of the wives, of a Pacha. I modestly just gave one glance in fear and trembling, lest I should annoy them in doing so, but greatly to my astonishment they were not abashed in the least: they stared at us and giggled just like school-girls; probably if the husband had been present their behaviour would have been different. They were dressed in European style, and their faces

were covered with the merest pretence of veiling. Whilst it was evident that nature had intended them to be brunettes, it was none the less apparent that they desired to appear blondes, and had employed art to eclipse nature, for each of them wore golden hair and showed unmistakable acquaintance with the rouge brush. My idea as to the secluded and oriental existence of Turkish ladies was decidedly modified ; I was also given to understand that contact with European manners and customs has had so far-reaching an influence, that many of the better-class Turks now no longer avail themselves of their regal rights and take unto themselves several wives, but confine their affections to one lady only.

I missed the last steamboat returning to Constantinople, and with some difficulty hired a *caïque* in which I was rowed back in the dark. The boatman was a Greek, and appeared to be in great dread of the Turkish officials, but nothing untoward occurred, and I arrived in due course at my destination.

Next day my friends, conducted by a *cavass* from the Consulate, took me to see the Galata Tower. The hand of time has left its traces, and as it is not considered very safe now, permission for our ascent was obtained with some little difficulty. The view from the top quite rewarded us for our climb,

for it included the whole of the city and the Golden Horn, and stretched from the Sea of Marmora to the Black Sea, taking in the whole of the Bosphorus. On removing our boots, we were allowed to enter St. Sophia Mosque. It is one of the largest and most ancient places of worship in the capital; it was used during the Greek occupation as a church, and on one of the walls a painting of the "Six Wings" is still to be seen as evidence that St. Sophia has not always been a mosque.

CHAPTER III.

BATOUM TO TIFLIS.

THE boat left Constantinople, steamed out of the Bosphorus into the Black Sea, and after calling at Trebizond and one or two other small and uninteresting ports, arrived at Batoum early in the morning of July 10th. Why the Black Sea is so called I do not know, for the water is nearly as blue as that of the Mediterranean. My experience of it, however, was very agreeable, the weather being exceedingly fine. It may be, perhaps, that both the Black Sea and the Turk are not quite so black as they are sometimes painted. The ship had taken up her position so quietly, that when I woke we were already moored some thirty yards from the quay. We were not allowed to leave the ship until we had been interviewed by the Custom House officials and had had our baggage inspected. From all the accounts I had heard about the extreme difficulty in getting one's belongings through the Russian Customs, and fearing that I should have

some trouble with the photographic apparatus and instruments I had with me, I had provided myself with a letter of introduction from the British Consul at Constantinople to the Consul at Batoum, so that I could get help if necessary.

After a short wait we were boarded by several military-looking men dressed in smart white uniforms faced with gold. I was surprised to find that they were merely Custom House officials, and not officers high in military service. When they knew where and to whom I was going, they passed our luggage after a most superficial examination.

Tiflis is connected with Batoum by the Batoum-Baku railway, and has a train service twice in the twenty-four hours. We were not able to leave Batoum until nearly midnight: our passports, which had been handed over by the Customs to the police authorities for their inspection, were not to be returned to us until the evening, the police offices being closed at two in the afternoon, and not opened again until seven.

The all-pervading odour here is that of petroleum, which is brought by rail in cylindrical reservoirs from the wells at Baku on the Caspian for shipment. One is impressed with the martial aspect the town bears: nearly every other man that one meets is dressed in

a smart uniform, for every official, military and civil, at all times wears a dress distinctive of his office. In the evening, having had our passports returned to us, we made our way to the station, and there fortunately met a Russian engineer who had travelled with us from Marseilles. He very kindly helped us to book our tickets and luggage, assistance much needed and greatly appreciated, as my knowledge of Russian was absolutely *nil*. He then spoke on my behalf to a Russian officer who was going to Tiflis by the same train as ourselves, whereupon I was invited to travel in the same carriage that he was to occupy. This gentleman spoke English fluently, and in conversation told me that he knew D., and had recently seen him in St. Petersburg. I was greatly impressed by the kindly way my companion took me under his care, and when, before our journey was ended, he invited me to spend a fortnight with him and shoot over his preserves, I was filled with admiration and surprise that such open hospitality should be so freely shown to a stranger and a foreigner.

The journey took thirteen hours, and thanks to the smooth way in which the cars moved over the rails, and the excellency of the arrangements for the comfort of the passengers in general, the greater part of the time was spent in sleep. The country

passed through was sparsely populated, and from the large number of ruined towers to be seen, showed that it was a land with a history dating back no inconsiderable time. On approaching Tiflis the Kurá came into view several times: it is a river of considerable size, but not navigable for boats owing to the rapidity of its flow, the irregular nature of its bottom, and the extreme and rapid variability of both itself and its bed. Large quantities of wood, however, made into rafts, were to be seen floating rapidly down to Tiflis, and cleverly manipulated by experienced raftsmen into the least dangerous channels. We reached Tiflis, a city of considerable size, lying in a hollow and nearly surrounded by fairly high hills. We had rather an exciting drive from the station to our hotel; our coachman galloped his horses over the irregular roads in what appeared to me a most reckless manner. Intense excitement, however, only began after we had run into a horse and brought its rider to the ground; then our Jehu, in order to put as big a distance between himself and his victim in as short a time as possible, lashed his horse into a furious gallop. As the roads were bad even for an Eastern town, the carriage behaved like a ship in a heavy sea, and it was only by dint of great exertions on the part of Grant and myself

that we, the dog, and our luggage arrived in safety at the Hotel de Londres.

We were met by Herr R——, the proprietor, who, in very fair English, gave me the pleasing news that



HOTEL DE LONDRES, TIFLIS.

he had received a telegram from D. that morning to say he was posting from Vladikavkas, and expected to reach Tiflis about seven o'clock in the evening; it was nearly midnight before he reached the hotel, weary and travel-stained after his journey of 200 versts. The delay was due to the fact that notice had not been given of his intended journey, and

consequently he had to be content with relays of horses inferior to those one is usually supplied with.

As Ibex and Moufflon were not supposed to be shot before the 15th of July, and it was only now the 20th of June (according to the Russian calendar, which is twelve days behind the English date), we had some twelve days to spend at Tiflis before it was necessary to leave for Erivan and the Alagueuz. The time was occupied with considerable enjoyment and profit in making necessary arrangements for the coming expedition, and inspecting Tiflis; moreover, the comfort and luxury we enjoyed in that excellent establishment, the Hotel de Londres, reconciled us to this delay, and enabled us the more easily to curb our burning desire to be roughing it under canvas.

The first consideration was to get the baggage through the Customs; it consisted of thirty-nine cases, each averaging eighty pounds in weight; each case had its contents with their weights printed on the lid. We were accompanied by the Acting Governor-General's aide-de-camp, who was sent to facilitate matters; and as D. was received by the Chief of the Customs in such an effusively courteous manner, we quite expected that an estimate of the duty to be paid would be formed from an examination of the detailed lists of the contents on the cases, and that the baggage would

be delivered up unopened without delay. It soon became evident, however, that his excessively urbane manner was no indication of his intentions, and we were informed that the baggage could not be passed that day, as no business was done between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., and that we must come early the next day, between 8 and 9.

On the following morning, at the appointed time, we put in an appearance at the Customs House, and after a good many hours' examination our baggage was finally cleared.

Tiflis is a city of many nationalities, for not only does one meet Georgians and other Caucasians difficult to distinguish from one another by the uninitiated, but also many Russians, Armenians, Greeks, Persians, and a few Turks. By nature the Caucasians are distinctly a fine race. The men, with their broad shoulders and slim waists, seen to advantage in well-fitting and picturesque outer garments, carry themselves with a certain manly dignity. Their features, regular and well-cut, are of a refined Hebraic type, but their face belies their manners, which are much more Hebraic than refined. The women are a little disappointing; though many of them are Madonna-like, the absolute want of any expression, combined with an attire somewhat resembling a nun's, make the

realization fall considerably short of a possibly too exalted anticipation.

Some of the streets are of considerable width, and can boast of fine buildings; they would compare favourably with those of many European cities were



TIFLIS.

they a little more cleanly and not quite so disagreeably odoriferous. To give Tiflis its due, however, one must admit that unpleasant odours are not experienced in anything like a concentrated form except in those narrow streets which constitute the bazaars or *maidan*; here the sun and air are kept out very

effectively by the overhanging houses, and the uneven roadways are thickly strewn with refuse. The inhabitants of this quarter are mostly Persians, and they appear to be more largely occupied in manufacture than barter. These shaven-headed gentlemen are to



FERRY-BOAT, TIFLIS.

be seen in their pigeon-hole-like shops open to the street making carpets or leather goods, moulding silver jewellery, executing rich chasings in the same metal, or forging weapons; some were occupied in making wine-bags from the skins of oxen, sheep, and pigs; the hair or wool is left on and covered with tar,

the skin is stitched up with the tarred hair or wool inside, and as the legs are left, the bag when filled with wine resembles somewhat in shape the animal whose skin was used. The Caucasian wine, of which large quantities are produced, is naturally not improved by the flavour of tar acquired from these bags when new; however, when they have been in use for some time the wine is not appreciably affected. One of the features of Tiflis is its baths supplied with very hot sulphurous water direct from springs. The process one submits to is somewhat similar to that experienced at an ordinary Turkish bath, and is so painfully thorough that only those of pachydermatous physique can endure the scalding, rubbing, and massage, and the ordinary individual is fortunate if he escapes with half his skin. If one may judge from the large number of people one sees who evidently would benefit by a visit to these baths, it would appear that they are used more for recreation than for their cleansing and therapeutic properties.

These baths, like most of the commercial affairs of Tiflis, are in the hands of Armenians, and one day on leaving we had an experience of their peculiar manner of transacting business. For at least five minutes three men held a heated argument as to the price of two baths, bringing to their aid a

calculating machine, consisting of a number of bobbins in a rickety frame, and it was only our impatience to be going that brought about a unanimous opinion, and prevented what appeared to be an imminent fight amongst themselves as to what we were to be charged.



TIFLIS FROM THE KURA RIVER.

My genial fellow-traveller from Batoum to Tiflis called upon D., and I then learned that he was Prince O., a man of considerable influence in the Caucasus, and of large military experience against the Turks. He seemed very desirous that D. should pay him a visit and shoot in his preserves. He said he had

plenty of bears, and quite seriously promised to show how to tackle one at close quarters. His method was to make Bruin stand on his hind legs by kicking him on the nose, and so afford a shot in the chest, a method, one would imagine, more valorous than discreet. Prince O. asked us to dinner at his hotel, to meet a few members of the Georgian aristocracy.

Just as we had commenced dinner I was somewhat startled by the appearance of a man dressed in the picturesque Caucasian costume, who, rushing into the room, kissed our hostess's hands and was kissed on the forehead in return. He was then introduced as Prince C., and I was afterwards told that when a child he had been taken captive, together with our host's mother, by the redoubtable Schamyl, and dragged into the mountain fastnesses tied to his horse's tail.

Each guest partook of whatever dish he or she fancied, and it appeared strange to me to see each person dining differently from, and independently of, the host and his neighbours. I was advised to try Russian soup, so, as a philosopher, I made the experiment; its basis was a native drink, made from barley, and amongst other ingredients it contained lumps of half-cooked fish, ice, cucumber, and sorrel.

Not wishing to die an unnatural and premature death, I partook sparingly.

After dinner we went in a body to one of the gardens patronized almost exclusively by Armenians, and with the exception of a few favoured Russian and



MAIN BRIDGE, TIFLIS.

Georgian officials, reserved for their own people. It was a special night, and all the wealth and beauty that Tiflis could muster from its Armenian population were to be found either strolling about the avenues under the illuminated trees, or sitting at the little tables taking refreshment, chatting, or listening to the

excellent band which was discoursing sweet music—operatic and otherwise.

One of the features of the evening was a performance by "Sazandari," an Armenian band of stringed instruments and tomtoms. One gentleman, who hid his head behind a tambourine to prevent his facial contortions from producing a painful impression upon the audience, gave forth a wailing kind of noise, keeping within a compass of only four or five notes. After this noise, which appeared to me devoid both of words and music, had gone on for some time, we were informed that he had favoured us with several national songs.

Having augmented our party by the addition of a few princesses, we paid a visit through another garden frequented by the better-class Russian and Georgian population. Here we stayed until two in the morning, and even when we left there was still a considerable company of both gentlemen and ladies.

These gardens fulfil the functions of the social clubs; they are open to both sexes, and as in the noonday it is too hot to do anything but rest or sleep, the cool of the evening and night is seized upon for exercise and recreation, and the appearance of a lady strolling about in the gardens in the early hours of the morning,

quite unaccompanied, produces neither astonishment nor disapprobation.

As the sanitary authorities of Tiflis allow no slaughter-houses in the town, it is compulsory that the supply of meat be prepared at an *abattoir* some



THE BAZAAR, TIFLIS.

five miles away; here the offal, thrown out at early morn on a piece of waste ground, attracts large numbers of Egyptian vultures. As I wished to get a specimen or two, Herr R., the hotel proprietor, who is a sportsman in his way, proposed an excursion with that object.

At 4 a.m. one morning we drove out to the *abattoir*, and found a large number of these carrion feeders taking their breakfast in close company with a herd of half-wild pigs, whose erect hair down the spine and long snouts give them an ugly appearance, and made



IN THE BAZAAR, TIFLIS.

them look befitting companions for the vultures. The birds were far too wild to be approached on foot. Fortunately they took so little notice of our carriage driving slowly by them, that we were able to shoot from the carriage at not more than twenty-five yards; and even at this close range they carried such a lot

of shot with so little inconvenience, that out of the large number we hit only three were bagged. They were fine specimens, measuring something like five feet from tip to tip; they are not natives of the Caucasus, being only summer visitors here, returning to Egypt to spend the winter.

CHAPTER IV.

A VISIT TO BORJOM.

HIS Imperial Highness the Grand Duke Nicholas, the eldest son of the Grand Duke Michael Nicolaievitch, formerly Viceroy of the Caucasus, graciously invited D. to visit him at his Caucasian residence at Borjom, and hearing that I was with him as medical attendant, kindly extended his invitation to me. D. was pleased to accept, and at 3 p.m. we took train from Tiflis to Borjom, a distance of nearly six hours by rail.

At some of the stations on the way we noticed bands of men, the chief peculiarity of whose attire was a specially-shaped hat denoting membership of a sect—the Douchobortzy. Their religious teaching somewhat resembles that of Bible-readers, and, having refused military service upon principle, they were being sent back to their various districts.

On reaching Michailovo, a small town named after the present Grand Duke, we branched off to Borjom

on a line opened by the Grand Duke Michael. On approaching Borjom the country became more mountainous, and we reached our destination by ascending a valley with pine-covered hills converging



THE GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS MIKHAÏLOVITCH.

on either side. We were met at the station by one of the Grand Duke's men, who told us that His Highness was waiting dinner for us, consequently we lost no time in making our way through the town to the Grand Duke's villa, a distance of about two miles.

On arriving we found His Highness standing on the steps to welcome D., and as the dinner was as ready for us as we were for it, we were speedily doing it ample justice. The only others present besides D. and myself were Professor Radde, the eminent zoologist,



THE GRAND DUKE NICHOLAS' RESIDENCE, BORJOM.

and the well-known entomologist, Dr. Sievers, who is acting as the Grand Duke's secretary, and helping him in his scientific investigations in the insect world.

I was quite charmed by the kindly way in which the Grand Duke put me at my ease by his chatty conversation and affable manner. He quite astonished me

with his wide knowledge of English people and their customs, and I was deeply impressed by the interest he took in scientific matters in general. His Highness is quite an authority on Lepidoptera, and his collection is one of the finest and most complete in existence.

Professor Radde, well known in zoological and botanical circles by his labours which have brought the Tiflis museum to such completeness and perfection, entertained us with valuable information about the fauna and flora of the Caucasus, which he has thoroughly investigated. He somewhat damped our expectations of sport on the Alagueuz mountains, for he told us that during his recent botanical excursion there he saw no game on that range. His account of the Ararats was by no means favourable.

He informed us, however, that Ibex were to be found in large herds at and beyond Nakhitchevan on the Araxes.

Next morning, Sunday, we paid a visit to the old villa of the Grand Duke Michael. The marvellous Caucasian horns it contained fired us with additional ambition and enthusiasm for the expedition. A



CAPRA ÆGAGRUS.

stroll through the town afforded us an opportunity of seeing a considerable number of fashionable people, who had taken up their residence at this pleasant summer retreat to avail themselves of the baths and waters which have made the town so justly popular.



BORJOMI.

Everything was conducive to luxury and ease. The town consists largely of picturesque villas scattered along the banks of the upper Kurà; the prolific vegetation and the artistically laid-out gardens, enhanced in beauty by the grandeur of their natural surroundings, make the place one of earth's fairest

spots. We had to content ourselves with a somewhat brief inspection of the town, and hasten back to the Grand Duke's, as the Emir of Bokhara and his suite were expected to luncheon.

The reception of the Emir was quite an impressive ceremony. As the eastern potentate, accompanied by his son and Prime Minister, drove up, the Grand Duke's military band, over forty strong, struck up music appropriate to the occasion, and His Highness received his illustrious visitors with befitting pomp and ceremony. The Emir, who was dressed in oriental costume, wore the epaulets of a Cossack regiment, of which he was an honorary general, and two richly bejewelled orders; one presented to him



THE EMIR OF BOKHARA.

by the late Emperor of Russia, bearing his miniature portrait, the other given by the present Emperor; whilst his son, a youth of nearly sixteen, displayed

the epaulets of a sub-lieutenant. The Grand Duke, his officers and servants, in compliment to the Emir, wore decorations of appropriate grade presented by him.

Besides the house party, there were present to meet the Emir Princess Tamara and her two daughters, the Princesses Elizabeth and Katherine, who, although natives of Georgia—being direct descendants of the last Georgian king, and proudly claiming lineage from King David—were essentially European in manner, customs, and dress.

They spoke excellent English, and in conversation gave me an interesting account of Schamyl's prolonged resistance to Russian occupation of the country. The Princess had had personal experience of this mountaineer's exploits, as she, when a child, had been carried into captivity by him, together with her mother and other members of the family, and had only been set free on payment of a heavy ransom, and return of his son, who was held as a hostage at St. Petersburg.

The Emir and his suite lent quite an oriental aspect to the occasion. Although His Highness's bearing was dignified and commanding, he looked comparatively young; at least, he did not display the aged and careworn expression one might expect to find in

a man who had been courageous enough to accept the responsibility of wives to the number of 232, as was the case with him. Although his oriental appearance brought to my recollection early impressions of certain Eastern tales, yet his kindly



GUESTS OF THE GRAND DUKE AT BORJOM.

expression caused me no anxiety as to the happiness of his numerous spouses. His son would appear to be as matrimonially inclined as his father, for on attaining the age of sixteen, in a few months' time, he is to start with the modest number of sixteen wives. The usual complimentary toasts, of no great

length, as they required to be interpreted by a dragoman, brought the interesting occasion to a close.

We bade farewell to the Grand Duke about midnight, and left Borjom at 1.15. The Grand Duke had thoughtfully given orders that a sleeping-car should be secured for D., and peaceful was our sleep until our return to Tiflis in the morning.

CHAPTER V.

ERIVAN AND THE ALAGUEUZ MOUNTAINS.

BEFORE leaving Tiflis for the Alagueuz mountains and the valley of the Araxes, we heard something about the people we should meet, and the sport we might expect in those regions from Colonel K., a Russian officer who had had personal experience in these districts. He had spent several days on the Alagueuz hills, and gave a rather more hopeful opinion of our chances there than Professor Radde, having, according to his account, succeeded in making a very fair bag of both Ibex and Moufflon. He had had considerable military experience in quelling the disturbances so frequently occurring between the Kurds and Armenians in the south of the Caucasus, and on the Armenian frontier, and had thus enjoyed ample opportunities of gaining an insight into the characters of these two races. His opinion of the Armenian, as compared to the Kurd, was distinctly unfavourable

to the former. While the Armenian more than equalled the Kurd in ferocity and brutality when a favourable opportunity arose, he was conspicuously lacking in the personal bravery shown by the Kurd. Colonel K.—admitting personal knowledge of great cruelty inflicted on Armenians by Kurds—cited several instances where the Kurd was the victim of still greater atrocities at the hands of the Armenian. He related having seen the bodies of two Kurds who had been tied together and then tortured to death by fire, and on another occasion being horrified by finding the mutilated remains of another Kurd, who with skinned feet was made to dance by the persuasive powers of red-hot ramrods driven into his chest, making, as he assured us, terrible wounds. He also told us of a Kurd child of twelve being slowly and painfully murdered before the eyes of his grandfather, an old man of seventy-five, who subsequently suffered a similar fate. These facts somewhat modified my former opinion of the Armenian Christian compared with the Mahomedan Kurd, and I was forced to the conclusion that religious differences are not necessarily accompanied by a corresponding difference in moral behaviour.

Colonel K. did not think at all highly of the fighting capabilities of the Armenians. On a punitive

expedition against some marauding bands of Armenians, quite a small detachment of his Cossacks attacked and utterly routed an armed force many times superior in numbers. He found the Kurds much more formidable, and he recounted how objectionable they had made themselves to the Cossacks on the Persian frontier by their favourite sport of "sniping." This sportive propensity of trying their weapons on the Cossacks resulted in the determination that for every Cossack "sniped" the first ten Kurds met by his comrades should be shot, and vengeance was only completed when the ten dead men's shoes were placed on their comrade's grave. It was only last year that the Kurds were induced to stop their practices, after, in the course of about two months, seven Cossack graves had been decorated with seventy pairs of Kurdish shoes!

Our arrangements were now complete. The Acting Governor-General of the Caucasus, Prince A., had informed the Governor of the Erivan district of D.'s expected arrival, and the necessary arrangements for the carrying out of his expedition had been made. D. had secured the services of a cook, a Caucasian by race, David by name, of whose culinary art D. had some personal knowledge when with the Grand Duke Sergius the previous year. Having sent off

David the day before with the baggage at last rescued from the Customs, and, accompanied by the Hon. Mr. Guest, who had joined D. at Tiflis with the intention of spending part of the time under canvas with him, we left Tiflis for Erivan at 11 p.m. on July 10th (English date). The first part of our journey was by train to a place called Akstafa, where we arrived at 2 a.m. From there to Erivan the distance is 175 versts (about 116 miles), done by posting, in stages varying from fifteen to twenty-two versts. This method of travelling, though fatiguing, is not nearly so expensive as one would imagine, the official charge for each horse being only eight kopecks per verst, and twenty kopecks for the driver each stage. The four horses allowed for each carriage, harnessed abreast, are galloped most of the stage, and as fresh relays at the different posting-houses are quickly supplied for travellers of importance, the journey is comparatively rapid. We were only delayed a short time at Akstafa, and soon after three, before daybreak, started with two carriages and a wagon for personal luggage. The first part of our journey was somewhat unexciting, the only events of interest being a delay caused by a wheel coming off the luggage-wagon, and a collision later on with an ox-wagon. The road was fairly good, considering the rocky and rugged nature of the

country passed through, though in places it was rather dangerous, owing to the unprotected precipitous banks. As we got further on our way, we began to ascend, and then the scenery changed to pastures and wooded slopes. We frequently passed long caravans and ox-wagons heavily laden with the families of their owners, together with all their possessions, including household goods and live stock, such as hens, goats, etc. Horses were conspicuous by their absence. The natives used donkeys and oxen as beasts of burden, leaving the nobler animal almost exclusively to those who could afford to travel in the more luxurious manner of posting.

By one o'clock in the afternoon we had covered ninety versts, and reached the village of Semenovka, 6000 feet above the level of the sea, the highest point of our journey. We were now in the district under the control of the Governor of Erivan, who had sent a captain and ten Cossacks here to meet us.

Our rate of progress improved very considerably, for accompanied by the Cossack escort, we did this first stage of our further journey, a distance of twenty-two versts, in one hour and a quarter, arriving at the first posting-house in the Erivan Province. Here D. was welcomed by the chief of the district, who had ridden some way to meet him. For some distance the road

skirted a magnificent lake—Lake Goktcha—some thirty miles long, and situated 5000 feet above the level of the sea. It is famous for its very fine species of large trout. Fishing is only allowed every other year, and as this was the prohibited one, we were unfortunately unable to test the quality of the sport. In the lake is a small island, on which stands the celebrated monastery called Sevenga. One can admire the good sense of the monks in choosing such a healthy spot wherein to spend their existence. Were it not for the curious absence of trees, its shores would probably long since have afforded cool summer retreats for the inhabitants of the arid plains in the lower country near Erivan.

The whole way from Semenovka to Erivan we were accompanied by relays of Cossack escorts, who entertained us with various feats while at full gallop, called *djigitovka*. They astonished us by such acrobatic performances as standing on their heads in the saddle, getting on and off their horses, picking their caps up from the ground, rifle and sabre practice, sham duels with sword and dagger, all of which were done while at full gallop. These rode on ahead, and with many gesticulations cleared all other traffic out of the way, so that we should not be delayed, as described in the early chapters.

Soon after leaving Lake Goktcha, the snow-clad

peaks of the Alagueuz were now seen forty or fifty versts distant (some half-dozen in number), showing prominently among the lesser hills around. On approaching Erivan, when our carriage was not enveloped in the all-pervading dust accompanying us, the Ararats



THE ARARATS.

were to be seen raising their lofty heads heavenwards. Not until we were close to Erivan did we obtain a view of the town, as it is hidden away in a hollow, and is approached by a road which zigzags down to it.

We arrived at Erivan at seven in the evening, having accomplished the second stage of our journey

of eighty-four versts (fifty-six English miles) in five hours and three-quarters, including stoppages, a very creditable performance, considering the state of the roads and the heat and dust. We were met at the hotel by the Governor of the province, Prince Nakaschidze, and some of the chiefs of the various districts who had been summoned by him to give information as to the chances of sport in their respective districts. We had had a very fatiguing day, but there was something even more trying in store for us; D. was to entertain Prince Nakaschidze and his chiefs at dinner, and a dinner in the Caucasus is a ceremony at which the stoutest heart may quail—it is customary to do a colossal amount of toasting. When the health of all present had been drunk, one's relatives, near and far, were accorded a similar honour, and if there were still inclination and ability in this direction, one's relations in prospective afforded an excuse for further conviviality. I am afraid that Mr. Guest and I created a very poor impression, if we were to be judged entirely by our social capabilities, for we showed a lamentable lack of endurance, and were quite unable to compete with D.'s guests in the show of hospitable assurances. The next morning Prince Nakaschidze, accompanied by his chief police

attendants, showed us the principal features of the town. We visited the old palace and fortress of the last Persian Khan of Erivan, which was taken by the Russians about sixty-five years ago. We then paid a visit to the Persian mosque, where we were



ERIVAN.

received by the chief priests, who were so impressed by a visit from the Vice-Governor, that they forgot to request us to remove our shoes, and thus allowed us to desecrate their tabernacle with infidel shoe-leather. Our visit to the bazaar created somewhat of a sensation, and although the merchants displayed

with great pomp and ceremony specimens of the staple industries of the country, such as carpets and tapestries, they carefully avoided soliciting a bargain for fear the Vice-Governor might "request" them to part with their goods at a reasonable price. After



RUSSIAN OFFICIALS, ERIVAN. (PRINCE NAKASCHIDZE.)

driving through the town, the Vice-Governor and chiefs of the Araxes, Alagueuz, and Ararat districts joined D. at lunch, and a council of war was formed to discuss the coming campaign. The chief of the Araxes district spoke in glowing terms of our prospects, and gave us to understand we should find plenty of Ibex; the Alagueuz chief was

very little behind him in his assurances as to both ibex and moufflon. The chief from the Ararat district, however, discouraged us from visiting his territory, as he not only reported scantiness of game, but also a disturbed condition of the district, due to the lawless behaviour of the neighbouring Kurds. He told us that the day before he left there had been a skirmish between Cossacks and a band of thirty-five marauding Kurds, who only retired after about four hours' fighting, and the loss of more than half their number. Consequently it was decided to leave the Ararats severely alone, and following the range eastwards, content ourselves with a visit to the Alagueuz mountains and the Araxes.

Having sent our baggage on the day before, we started for the Alagueuz mountains early in the afternoon of July 13th, accompanied by the chief of the district and attended by a Cossack escort of eight men, under the command of a captain, who were to camp with us.

The road, where there was any pretence of one, was distinctly bad, and as we proceeded all definite tracks disappeared; however, as the least difficult way amongst the rocks and stones had been marked out by Cossacks a day or two before by little mounds of

stones, we managed to cover some twenty miles of our journey by carriage, when we were effectively stopped at the foot of the mountains by a torrent of considerable size. Here we dispensed with the carriages and took horse, which a Kurd chief, Iskanderbek, had in waiting for us.

On the way we passed through two or three villages, and at one of them, Askarak, we passed the Armenian Patriarch going to his residence at Etchmiadzin, a few miles away. His mode of travelling was most unpretentious; he was journeying on horseback with a retinue of only two men. Having taken to horseback, we attempted the crossing of the stream, which, though rapid and uncertain as to its bed, was successfully negotiated with one slight exception. Christopher, D.'s valet, parted company with his pony and was lost to view in the waters for a moment; however, he was soon mounted again, and none the worse for his ducking.

We now commenced our climb, and were conducted by Iskanderbek to his village, Akhis, a few miles up, where we were entertained for the night as his guest. Our host was on very friendly terms with the Russian authorities, who showed evidence of their faith in him by conferring on him the honorary rank of captain. He was considered somewhat of a scholar on the strength of not only possessing a book on popular

science written in Persian, but actually being able to read it. His geography, however, was lamentably weak, for he was possessed with the firm belief that Japan bordered on Persia. He showed us every hospitality in his power, although his *cuisine* was



NATIVE AND RUSSIAN OFFICERS.

peculiar and not extensive in variety ; he placed before us a meat pie the size of an ordinary tea-table and the consistency of a brick. This was to be helped down with masses of material resembling a compromise between cream, cheese, and rancid butter. Next morning we were up before daybreak, and by five

our caravan, consisting of twenty-one baggage-men, hunters, etc., with fifteen horses and five bullocks, accompanied by the Cossack escort and ourselves, were on the move. After a couple of hours' ascent, we halted at the last house we were to see for some days. Here resided a Russian gentleman, a friend of our host's, who entertained us at breakfast, and told us that at no very remote date he had seen a herd of Ibex. We now said "good-bye" to the chief of the district and Iskanderbek, and, continuing our ascent, at the next halt were welcomed by another Kurd chief, who rented the high pastures in the mountains, and who with his followers was to join us in camp. He rejoiced in the name of Hasanaha Schamschadinoff, and was a man of some importance, being a nephew of the last Kurdish prince of the dynasty of the Schamschadin. He was also a leader of the sect the "Izids," worshippers of the devil, whose chief tenet is in thinking that Lucifer will eventually be restored to his former high position. In spite of this peculiar belief, the members of this sect are considered by the authorities to be the finest and most trustworthy of all the Kurdish tribes.

Having travelled nearly twenty miles since morning, and reached to within about five miles of the summits of the main peaks, we pitched our camp, at an elevation

of 9200 feet, on a fresh green slope made beautiful by such common Alpine flowers as the daisy, dandelion, buttercup, forget-me-not, and gentian. We had ascended above patches of snow of considerable size, and were within a few hundred yards of some large snowfields which, melting under the scorching July sun, supplied with ice-cold water a streamlet running by our camp. The main bulk of the baggage had not yet reached our selected camping site, and as it was only mid-day we spent an hour or two on a preliminary investigation of the immediate vicinity of the camp. Although we carefully examined the neigh-



HASANAHA, KURD CHIEF, ALAGUEUZ.

bouring ridges and corries with the telescope, nothing living was to be seen; however, as we had avoided disturbing what might be likely ground, and had contented ourselves with merely a distant use of the glass, our hopes of future sport were not materially damped.

Later in the afternoon, when all the baggage had arrived, we pitched the three tents and put together

the bedsteads, chairs and tables, etc. Considering this was our first attempt, and consequently somewhat of an experiment, our camp was put in good order in a creditably short time.

Owing to our strange surroundings and expectations



VIEW OF THE ALAGUEUZ PEAKS.

for the morrow, our sleep that night was not of the soundest, and we were up by four o'clock next morning anxious to know what luck the day would bring.

D., accompanied by the Scottish stalker Grant and a native hunter, made for one of the main peaks. Although he was out about twelve hours and spied

out four or five large corries and ridges, he returned to camp disappointed, having seen no evidence either of Moufflon or Ibex beyond a questionable track on the top of one of the ridges. The only living things he saw were a couple of mountain Black-cocks. Mr.



OUR CAMP ON THE ALAGUEUZ.

Guest and I, who went out together, did not fare any better, for after much climbing and the diligent use of our glasses, we also failed to find any evidence of game.

As in the meantime our caravan had made a circuit of about fifteen miles to get into fresh ground, we



HUNTERS AND CARAVAN MEN, ALAGUEUZ.

went in search of the camp, and after about three hours' walking we were relieved by finding it.

On the following morning, D. and Mr. Guest attempted the investigation of another peak, but as they could see nothing, after a somewhat distant but prolonged inspection of the adjacent corries with their telescopes, they decided not to ascend to its highest summits. I myself stayed with the caravan, which got on the march by eight o'clock so as again to change the scene of our operations.

We went through some very rough country, and in order to avoid making a *détour* which would have



OUR COOK, ALAGUEUZ.

involved too long a day's march, we were compelled to cross a valley about 1500 feet deep, with steep and stony hills on either side and a torrent rushing along its bottom; and though our pack-horses were very strong, and so clever that they walked over the stones and boulders more after the manner of cats than horses—an achievement largely due to the fact that their hoofs were well protected by shoes which almost completely covered in the frog; yet the negotiation of this valley was too much for some of them, for they were quite unable to climb the other side with their packs, and some considerable delay was caused by the

knew a place where I might have the luck to find a Bear or two, so later on in the afternoon I started with one of Hasanaha's followers for a ridge composed largely of massive boulders—a distance of about three miles from camp. On reaching likely ground the



HASANAHA BY HIS TENT.

native took off his boots and proceeded noiselessly a few yards in advance of me, peering into every crevice wherein he thought a Bear might be taking his afternoon nap.

We found several places which showed evidence of having been recently occupied by bears, and at last, on peeping into a cavern-like place, the native



OUR CARAVAN MEN.

beckoned me to come up, giving me to understand that we had at last found Bruin at home. I was wearing boots with nails, and hesitating to walk over the sharp rocks in my stockinged feet, unfortunately had not removed them.

This regard for my personal comfort was disastrous to my chance of success, for I made so much noise in clambering on to the boulder which commanded a view of the beast, that I disturbed him from his *siesta*, and before I could fire he disappeared round a corner and escaped across an adjacent snowfield, leaving unmistakable tracks.



ON THE ALAGUEUZ MOUNTAINS.

After this disappointment nothing more was seen except a view of a Wolf disappearing in the distance, and I contented myself with the less exciting amusement of collecting a few of the Alpine plants which were to be found in great abundance at this altitude of between 10,000 and 11,000 feet.

Early next morning, soon after 2 a.m., D. and Mr. Guest sallied forth to a neighbouring peak for their final search for game. They carried out their usual inspection of the numerous corries without meeting with any encouragement, so they returned to camp early in the forenoon, and decided to make their way

back to Erivan with as little delay as possible, having seen quite sufficient of the Alagueuz mountains.

As there was no game to be disturbed, and as hitherto no ammunition had been used, D. decided that a few cartridges might be spared for rifle practice



IN CAMP.

before striking camp. The practice resolved itself into an impromptu competition between D. and his party on the one side and Hasanaha's followers on the other; and although we with our accurately and finely-sighted rifles, fitted with all the latest improvements, made very fair practice, yet one was compelled to admit

that the natives with their antiquated weapons were a good match for us. It was marvellous what accuracy they showed, and this exhibition of the deadliness of their aim made us feel thankful that they were in camp with us helping to protect us, and not hostile.



VILLAGE HUTS AND NATIVES, BAZARDJOUK.

At noon we started down the mountain for Bazardjouk, a village about ten miles distant. We were accompanied by Hasanaha and his followers, and the long caravan wending its way down to the plains appeared picturesque and imposing. We soon left the snowfields and the wild rocky ridges behind us,

and at an elevation of about 7000 feet came upon grassy slopes made fertile by many streams running from the snowfields above, and beautified by abundant Alpine flora. These slopes afforded excellent pasturage for large numbers of cattle, goats, and horses, which were to be seen grazing in all directions.

We now saw signs of habitation. Here and there were to be seen curious dwellings, some constructed of rough stones roofed in with matting, and others the walls of which were formed by laths, held together by mud. On reaching Bazardjouk, we were received and entertained by the *Starchina*, or head man of the village, whose two-roomed house was quite luxurious compared with the surrounding huts, and held the unique distinction in that it was the only house that could boast of windows. All the other dwellings were so low, and buried in the ground so deeply, that it was difficult to realize they were for human habitation. The walls were of the roughest stones, and the roofs consisted of rafters covered by a great thickness of earth. As the tops of the houses frequently joined one another, and streets were conspicuous by their absence, the only method of travelling from one part of the village to the other was over the tops of the houses. A visit to a man sick with fever afforded me an opportunity of an

inspection of one of these places. The cave-like dwelling was divided into two compartments, one for the family, and the other, if one may judge by the odour which emanated from it, for their cattle. The walls on the inside were just the same unadorned



A NATIVE GIRL, BAZARDJOUK.

rough stones as on the outside, while the floor was formed by the bare earth, in the centre of which was an excavation, which I imagined was for use as a fireplace in winter time. The only openings were a doorway, so small that one could only pass through it whilst bent nearly double, and an opening in the

centre of the room which, whilst allowing the escape of smoke and vitiated air, permitted the entrance of a little daylight. Of furniture there was none. In one corner I found the sick man lying on a pile of rags, attended by a woman who was apparently his wife. The woman appeared to show affectionate solicitude for him and proportionate suspicion of me, for it was with great difficulty that I was allowed to examine him, and with still greater difficulty was she persuaded to permit the administration of any medicine. I was particularly impressed at the exhibition of such tenderness amongst people whose habits and mode of life so closely resemble the lower animals. The natives are chiefly Armenians here, though some of them must have been Mahomedans, or else influenced by contact with Mahomedan Kurds, if one may judge by the number of the women seen with veiled faces wearing nether garments.

Inside the *Starchina's* house we found plenty of insect life of an unpleasant and irritating variety; we circumvented it to a very large extent by putting up our camp beds in the middle of the floor, and so securing a moderately peaceful night's rest. Next morning the packmen and ponies were discharged, and having said farewell to Hasanaha and his followers, who had so impressed us with their straightforward

behaviour and kindly yet dignified manner, we set out for Erivan by the carriages which had now arrived. Harvesting was in full swing, and one had opportunities of seeing the primitive method of threshing as done by the tread of oxen.



NATIVE VILLAGE.

CHAPTER VI.

RETURN TO ERIVAN.

WE reached Erivan by 11 a.m., and owing to the roughness of the roads, or rather to the want of roads, took five hours to cover a distance of forty versts.

As Prince Nakaschidze, the Acting Governor of the province, had been called away from Erivan, one of his chiefs representing him received us. Telegrams had come in from Nahitchevan giving most encouraging accounts of the presence of game in that district; further information also had been received stating its scarcity on the Alagueuz, information which, had it been received before our start, might have prevented us from trying our luck there, and finding out the state of affairs from personal experience.

We wanted to get into the Araxes valley as soon as possible; but as the baggage, which travelled more slowly than we, did not arrive from Bazardjouk until late in the afternoon, it was not until the following

morning that David, the cook, was despatched to Nahitchevan with our commissariat department, re-provisioned from our base of supplies at Erivan. Having given David nearly twenty-four hours' start, we followed him a little after 6 a.m. on the 20th of July, and arrived in the afternoon about five, having covered the distance of 150 versts in less than eleven hours. Some of the stages we did in excellent time; one of twenty-two versts only took us an hour and ten minutes, and part of one of seven versts was covered in the creditably short time of twenty minutes. The posting-stations were of a very primitive nature, even more so than those between Akstafa and Erivan. Refreshment, where any was to be found, was of the most meagre kind, and we considered ourselves fortunate when we were able to satisfy the cravings of nature with unleavened bread and weak tea.

We were escorted, as on our journey from Akstafa to Erivan, by relays of Cossacks, who entertained us with their usual acrobatic performances. The country we passed through presented a very arid appearance, the monotony of which was relieved only by the oases of trees which clustered around occasional springs. We several times had a close view of the river Araxes, the waters of which, on account of the ochre-coloured rocks which outcropped to such a large

extent in this district, resembled pea-soup in appearance and consistency. Some of the land more favoured in its water supply was sufficiently fertile to grow corn. Harvesting was nearly at an end, and we had an opportunity of observing the curious method of thresh-



NATIVE CARTS, ERIVAN.

ing adopted in this district. The wheat was strewn out on the ground in a circle, and an ox harnessed to a board was driven round over the wheat by a man who stood on the board.

On arriving at Nahitchevan, we found that the Governor of the place had arranged for us to occupy

the house of an Armenian merchant. Our quarters here were very comfortable, as the house was quite modern, and possessed six large rooms. David, who had come in with the baggage early in the day, had ready for us an excellent dinner, to which we did ample justice. In the evening the Governor paid D. a visit, and entertained us with good news as to game. He said Ibex and Moufflon were plentiful and not excessively shy. He thought the chief obstacle of success, however, would prove to be the difficult nature of the ground, and that it would be almost impossible to approach some of their retreats, chosen as they were amongst such dangerous and precipitous rocks. He also warned us that we might make the disagreeable acquaintance of a species of snake said to be plentiful amongst the hills; it is of such a deadly nature, that the result of a bite was certain death within a few minutes. Other vermin of a less fatal kind he advised us to avoid were scorpions, of which two species abound in this district—a large black one, the sting of which produces alarming though rarely fatal results, and a small grey kind which, though unpleasant to come in close contact with, causes only a local irritation.

Nahitchewan derives its name from a tradition that Noah settled there after the flood, and we were shown

an ancient Armenian cemetery in which Noah was said to have been buried. The Armenian priests show their belief in this story by occasionally paying ceremonial visits to the tomb to make sacrificial fires. This ancient cemetery is supposed to be infested with scorpions. Although we spent some time hunting for specimens under the stones, we saw none; our search, however, showed us how superficially these ancient bodies must have been buried, for wherever there was a crack in the earth human bones were to be seen protruding.

Nahitchevan, like Erivan, shows evidence of Persian occupation, the most noteworthy of which is the remains of the old fortifications made from mud and stones. The most ancient part of the town is in ruins, the result of an earthquake about fifty years ago. The chief part of the population is composed of Tartars, Armenians, and Persians, with the usual contingent of Russian officials.

The chief agricultural industries are the cultivation of the cotton and castor-oil plants, and a considerable quantity of castor-oil is used as an application for the large number of bullocks which form the chief beasts of burden of the district. The heat is so great and the climate so dry that unless their hides are anointed about three times a year they lose their suppleness and crack.

We made the acquaintance of a captain in command of a band of Cossacks on the Persian frontier, and he told us something about the lawlessness of the country. He said that a day or two ago when his men were having some rifle practice, the Kurds on



NAHITCHEVAN.

the other side, apparently thinking that they were the object of a hostile demonstration, opened fire in reply, killing two of his men. To show what trifles will induce them to fight, he related that one night his men saw some Kurds carrying a sack of something across the river at a ford. His Cossacks

opened such a heavy fire on them that the Kurds were compelled to retreat, leaving the sack on a sandbank in the middle of the river. For some hours a fusillade was kept up from either bank, neither party venturing to possess themselves of it. In the morning the Kurds retired from the scene of operations, abandoning the sack. When the Cossacks captured it they found that the booty for which there had been this prolonged contention was merely a sack of peas the Kurds were endeavouring to smuggle into Russian territory. We were naturally anxious to know what were the chances of coming across brigands while camping in this district, as we had always heard that the frontier was a favourite hunting ground for them.

The captain told us there had been a band of them reported at no great distance from Nahitchewan, and thought it very likely they were in the neighbourhood in the hopes of making the acquaintance of D., having probably heard of his intended visit. He told us how that only a few months ago a man of the appropriate name of Nabi was occupied in raiding the surrounding villages. As he had killed about thirty Cossacks, the price of 600 roubles was put on his head; for some time he avoided capture by making his way across the river into Persian

territory when pursued by the Cossacks. In order to put a stop to Nabi's doings, the Russian authorities requested those in authority at Teheran to help them to catch him. An officer with a hundred men was sent from Teheran to the frontier; but the Persians' method of procedure was hardly calculated to effect Nabi's capture, for it consisted in notifying him of their approach and then raiding the villages on their own account. Having satisfied his own desire for plunder, the Persian officer now returned to the capital, stating that he had been unable to effect Nabi's capture, but had come across many devastated villages, which he wisely attributed to Nabi's doings. Nabi was eventually taken and shot. But this has not always been the fate of such men, for his predecessor, a man well known by the name of Kerym, after having gained very considerable notoriety, escaped from Russian territory into Persia, and was rewarded for his exploits by being made *aide-de-camp* to the Shah of Persia. The Cossacks themselves at times take matters into their own hands, for at one time the officials noticed that the number of smugglers handed over for the receipt of justice by no means corresponded with the number of those captured. This condition of affairs was only explained when on investigation it was found

that a certain number of the prisoners taken were treated in the following summary manner: the unfortunate men were dropped on to a stone from such a height that they received injuries of so severe a nature that they eventually died.

Although we had been led to suppose we might suffer from the effects of snakes and scorpions, yet we found smaller vermin much more of a reality. At night-time the mosquitoes and in day-time the flies are a constant source of annoyance. The mosquitoes are very small, but nevertheless of a particularly irritating nature. The natives escape from their attacks by sleeping in the open, either on their housetops or on raised platforms, for this species is so tiny that the lightest breeze prevents them from settling on their victims. The eruption produced by their bite is of a formidable character; in appearance it is exactly like that of small-pox in its early stage, only far more irritating and painful.

We only stayed one day at Nahitchevan, and at five o'clock on the morning of the 21st the caravan with fifteen horses and ten attendants, accompanied by Christopher, Grant, and David, started for the Dari-Dagh.

D., Mr. Guest, and myself, with five Cossacks and a captain of the Border Police, followed at noon. It

was very hot and dusty; in fact, there was so much dust in the atmosphere that we could only see three or four miles ahead of us. After about two hours' riding we halted at a village which was divided into two parts, Tartar and Armenian. The country was very arid, and water was so scarce that its supply to the natives, both for irrigation and domestic use, had to be carefully regulated. Indeed, there were no springs in the immediate neighbourhood, and all the water used had to be brought from the wells at Nahitchevan through artificial canals, which were only opened once every twenty days. Owing to this lamentable state of affairs, the sanitary arrangements of the place had been in such a deplorable condition, that in the preceding year an outbreak of diphtheria had raged, and had caused the death of as many as seventy-five children in this one small village. About four o'clock in the afternoon we came up with the caravan, which had halted at the foot of a precipitous and rocky mountain called Dari-Dagh. We were here at an elevation of about 4000 feet, and were compelled to pitch our camp at this comparatively low altitude, as at this time of year all the springs at a higher elevation are dried up, and even now the only supply of water fit to drink was two hours distant. This scarcity was largely due to the

fact that the mountain was only 6500 feet high, and had had no snow on it for some considerable time.

We were soon making a distant inspection of the face of the mountain through the telescope, and obtained our first view of Ibex, three or four in number, which had come out on to the highest feeding ground for their evening meal. D. made two attempts after game from this camp. The first day he started at three in the morning and made an ascent from the left side of the mountain; although out for nearly twelve hours, he did not get a sight of Ibex. He, however, received some little encouragement by finding a small herd of Moufflon (*Ovis orientalis*) containing one fair ram—first seen about 800 yards distant. D. attempted to approach them, and although he got within about 100 yards, he found the ram had been disturbed and had made off, leaving only ewes behind. The natives urged him to shoot, and seemed astonished at his refusal. It was not at all strange that the ram should have been disturbed; it was rather surprising that the wethers remained, as the natives with the Russian captain who had accompanied D., and who was conspicuously dressed in a white uniform, showed themselves very prominently on the summit of every ridge, and appeared to think that they

were materially helping D. by making as much noise as possible. Their idea apparently was to disturb any game that might lie hidden, observe the direction it took in its flight, and then follow it up in the



NATIVE HUNTERS, DARI-DAGH.

hope of finding it again. This method of procedure D. of course disapproved of. One of the hunters said he saw two Ibex, but they were not seen by the rest of the party. On the next day D. and Mr. Guest struck up to the highest ridges, in the same direction taken on the previous day, in the hopes

of seeing the Moufflon stalked on the day before. The rocks were very steep, and it was only after a two hours' laborious zigzagging ascent that the heights were reached. The same herd as seen the day before were again sighted seven or eight hundred yards distant on the other side of a large corrie. The ground was very unfavourable for stalking, and on covering half the distance and getting another view of where they were last seen, it was found that they had disappeared, in all probability having viewed or scented the party.

They now came across an Ibex path, showing many tracks. After following it for three or four miles, keeping about three hundred yards from the top of the ridge and spying out all the corries below without seeing anything, they made for a saddle, by which they gained the further side of the ridge of the mountain, and on inspection saw a ram and a couple of wethers feeding about half a mile off in the hollow below. These were probably the same seen earlier in the day. An unsuccessful stalk was attempted, and a return to camp made. I myself went out once while at the Dari-Dagh. Accompanied by three sportive Cossacks, I made the ascent of the mountain bearing to the right. Although I spent several hours examining the shady recesses among the rocks, which

I thought would be likely places for Ibex to take their rest after the morning meal, my inexperienced eye could detect nothing, and even if I could have seen anything I should have been very much surprised if I had come to close quarters, for the Cossacks, whom I was unable to restrain, appeared to think that their chief duty consisted in making as much noise as possible. They talked loudly to one another, and at times, unable to control their feelings, burst into song. In justice to the native hunters of the district, I must say that these three festive gentlemen made no profession of any stalking capabilities, and accompanied me more as a guard of honour than as professed stalkers.

During our stay at Dari-Dagh we were considerably annoyed at night by the persistence and strength of the wind, for more than once we were aroused from our troubled slumbers to find the tents on the top of us, and were obliged to turn out and put things right with spare rope. Here, as on the Alagueuz mountains, there was no vestige of trees in the immediate neighbourhood of the camp, and it was necessary to bring all our fuel from a distance; indeed, at times we were reduced to the use of camel's dung.

The night previous to striking camp here we

witnessed a somewhat extraordinary performance. The Cossacks had been forbidden to use their guns, except in self-defence; some of them, however, unable to restrain their sportiveness, went out on their own account after Ibex. Not far from camp they came upon a herd of females and kids, and by firing and the aid of their dogs drove them in the direction of the camp. As soon as the frightened herd appeared on the ridge opposite to the camp and separated from it by a valley, the remaining Cossacks in camp, headed by their captain, commenced to blaze away in their direction; as they were the best part of a mile away, and on the move, it is needless to add that the herd suffered nothing beyond fright. Of course, it was absolutely useless to think of staying any longer at this camp after the neighbouring ground had been so effectually disturbed by this fusillade.

CHAPTER VII.

NEGRAM-DAGH.

HAVING given Dari-Dagh a fair trial without any success, on the morning of the 24th we moved camp for a distance of about fifteen miles, and took up a new site near a small spring on the Negram-Dagh, and here we stayed until the 30th.

During our stay at this place D. went out every day. His chief hunter was a middle-aged Armenian, a Persian subject named Kaloust. This man presented a strange appearance in his tattered garments, and was distinguished from the other hunters by wearing for headgear what had once been an old Scotch shooting cap, given him many years before by a sporting Russian officer. He was an excellent hunter with extensive and peculiar experience in stalking, having not always confined himself to the lower animals. He was persuaded to relate how two years ago, while Ibex hunting on the Persian side, when his comrade was assailed by three brigands, he stalked to

the rescue, and, getting two of the enemy in a line, shot them both dead with one bullet. Then he and his comrade cut the remaining man's throat, so as to avoid any unpleasant recrimination.

Kaloust has the credit of several other successful



OUR HUNTERS ON THE PERSIAN FRONTIER.

stalks after such game, but his innate modesty prevented him from owning it. However, if one may judge from his villainous yet not ill-natured physiognomy, one would imagine that he has not been unjustly credited with these performances.

D.'s first day was somewhat curtailed, as he started

out from our camp at Dari-Dagh soon after three in the morning, and rode for about three hours before reaching what was considered likely ground. The first sign of anything living was four pack-horses and three men seen on the sky-line. On getting nearer, the hunters proclaimed them to be well-known characters who had succeeded in smuggling tea across the Araxes during the night on rafts floated by inflated wine-bags. They were now making for their hiding-places among the rocks.

About seven o'clock a herd of something was to be made out, but at such a distance that the animals appeared vague specks through the telescope, and only the fact that they were seen to alter their position enabled them to be distinguished as animate from the surrounding stones and rocks. D. decided to approach them, and as they were such a distance off and the boulders strewn about were so large and numerous, he and his hunters rode some considerable distance until they arrived at a deep corrie, where they dismounted.

They now followed the corrie up so as to get to the leeward of where they expected to find the herd. However, on carefully spying over the ridge nothing was to be seen. As they had had no sight of the herd for about two hours they judged that it had fed further on, so they made for the next ridge, and on looking

down into a very deep corrie, saw a herd of Ibex of about a dozen does and young bucks on the move, having probably scented them owing to the shiftiness of the wind.

One of the hunters now suggested that these were not the Ibex seen earlier in the morning, and that probably they might be found beyond another ridge still further on. D. thought it only a remote and improbable chance, and allowed the advance to be made without due precaution, and with the wind at their backs. The result was that when they reached the ridge eight splendid heads were to be seen, but only for a moment, for, disturbed by winding the hunters, they had already reached the opposite ridge, and were merely taking a farewell look before disappearing out of sight. After two hours' further work, as nothing more was seen, the horses were sent for, and the Negram-Dagh camp was reached by noon.

On the way back to camp they saw a large number of Red-legged Partridges, called in Russian *Kurotchky*, running over the rocks. Three camels were also sighted. The hunters said they had been turned out into the mountains owing to sickness, and left to shift for themselves. They are said usually to recover, and are then found and restored to their owners.

Soon after 3 a.m. D., taking with him Grant, Kaloust, and another native hunter, Kodja by name, started from camp in the direction of the Araxes valley. They rode for about one hour along the bed of a dried-up stream, going slowly, as day had not yet broken. On approaching the precipitous cliffs, below which runs the river, they dismounted and carefully made for the summit of the ridge, so as to command a view of the valley of the Araxes beneath. The rocky steep forming either side of the valley are so precipitous, that the river runs in what would be better described as a gorge. The rocks are piled up almost perpendicularly to a height of about 1500 feet. The outcrops of the strata are almost vertical, and form a succession of fantastic and irregular terraces. Some of these numerous terraced spurs are separated by ravines having the character of shoots, down which, on the slightest disturbance, the shaly stones roll to the river below. Apparently devoid of all vegetation, it is only when actually on these spurs that one sees in the crevices amongst the rocks the coarse and scanty herbage upon which the Ibex largely subsist. Acquaintance with the south or Persian side of the valley was limited to inspection from the opposite bank of the river. It would not have been safe to have ventured across except under a strong

escort, and for obvious reasons an armed force could not be taken into Persian territory without previous negotiation. So far as one could see, the formation was similar to that on the north or Russian side, and from the direction in which the outcrops of the strata



VALLEY OF THE ARAXES.

pointed, it would appear that at some early date, before the valley and river existed, the strata on either side were continuous.

Spying from the ridge in the first light of the morning, before the sun had risen, they soon picked out a fine buck, about 400 yards away, feeding on the highest pastures, just below the summit of the

rocks. D., taking Grant with him, made a *détour* to get to leeward and gain some rocks which afforded good cover. When he obtained a view of where the buck was last seen feeding, he was disappointed to find it vacant. Feeling sure that the animal had not got their wind, and had only fed over the ridge into the next hollow, they approached the ridge noiselessly—he himself was wearing india-rubber shoes, and Grant had removed his boots, and had crept over the rough intervening ground in his stockings. On peeping over the rocky ridge they saw the horns of three good bucks about 200 yards off, feeding in the corrie; one of them was probably the Ibex they had seen a few minutes previously. The ground afforded sufficient cover for them to creep up to within about 100 yards, and here D. prepared to take his shot, but owing to his breathlessness he was unable to sight steadily; the bead danced up and down to such an extent that he was compelled to wait some seconds before he could hope to get a steady shot. Alas! the delay of a few precious seconds was fatal, for without apparent cause they made off, and before a shot could be obtained had placed themselves beyond danger. D. learnt the cause of their flight afterwards from Kaloust, who was watching the proceedings from a distance. A herd of about fifteen Ibex some 800 yards

away, not noticed by him in his intentness after game nearer at hand, had been disturbed by seeing him; the three bucks which were being stalked, seeing this herd in flight, had taken the alarm. They now followed the top of the ridge overlooking the valley, spying out the hollows likely to afford pasturage for Ibex. On reaching a large ravine which passed down among the rocks to the Araxes below, they picked out with their glasses what appeared to be the three bucks previously seen, playing amongst the boulders near the bottom of the ravine, not far from the river. As they were nearly a mile away, the intervening ground was difficult, and the immediate approach to the game did not afford good cover for stalking, it was decided to leave them undisturbed. They now proceeded still further along the ridge, and after about two hours' walk made out a herd in a deep and rocky corrie about 500 yards below them. D. tried to approach, but the ground was so very precipitous, and the stones made to roll so easily, that the stalk had to be abandoned, so he joined the native hunters and started back towards camp. On the way Kaloust, who was making free and effective use of a small mother-of-pearl binocular of inferior quality, presented to him many years previously, spotted a buck taking his siesta under the shadow of a rock. D. took Kaloust

with him, and, making a *détour* of about a mile to get above him, successfully reached a ridge which commanded a view of the spot at about 120 yards' distance.

On peeping over, two or three other bucks were to be seen feeding at the foot of the boulders. D. picked out what seemed to be the best, and was successful in grassing it. At the report of the shot about six others sprang up and made for the other side of the corrie. A second shot broke a leg of another Ibex, but did not prevent the beast getting clean away. However, they gave D. another chance, of which he successfully availed himself, for on reaching the far side of the corrie they made a short stand, as is often the case, and he was able to bring down another buck. They were small heads, but as they were the first-fruits of the expedition, their appearance in camp produced general rejoicing and great hope for the future.

Encouraged by the success of the previous day, D. again started early, taking with him Grant and Kaloust, and made for the Araxes valley lower down towards Julfa. After spying out the rocky corries for about three hours, a herd, consisting only of does and kids, was sighted playing amongst the rocks. They were naturally left to continue their gambols, and as nothing more was seen after still further search, an early return

to camp was made. D. tried the native moccasins made of raw dried hide. He did not repeat the experiment, as he found that their thin soles afforded very little protection to the feet in walking over rough stony ground, and they were responsible for



FIRST BLOOD ON THE PERSIAN FRONTIER (GRANT AND KALoust).

great tenderness of his feet, as well as the shortness of the day's attempted sport.

On the following morning D. with Kaloust and Kodja started from camp at half-past three, and made for the same part of the rocky valley of the Araxes they had tried two days previously. They reached

the rocks in about two hours, opposite the ancient Monastery of St. Stephen, which is situated on the Persian side, and instead of working down towards Julfa they worked up towards the Negram-Post. After two or three hours' walking, having seen nothing, they halted for lunch, which, as far as the natives were concerned, consisted of about a quire of brown, paper-like bread, called *Lovasch*, and some dirty white cheese made from goat's milk.

Having rested a couple of hours, they left the valley, and tried a large rocky corrie some distance away from the Araxes rocks. As they were going down a grassy ravine Kaloust suddenly grasped D.'s arm, and pointed out to him the horns of a very good buck about one hundred yards distant. Peeping over the edge, D. saw two others feeding close by. He seized his rifle and, they being in too exposed a place, rushed for a boulder, which, though rather farther away from the animals, afforded them sufficient cover.

The animals fed quickly in the direction of and at a distance of about a hundred yards from their position. Their horns were the best seen up to the present, and from the size of the animals and the fact that they had large beards they were at least eight years old. D. rested his rifle on some scrub, which he thought would make a sufficiently soft bed, and fired at the

foremost beast. All three made off, but the two hindmost, after going a few yards, stood for a second, allowing him to get another shot from the same rest. Neither shots were effective. In both cases he had fired too high, and his want of success was explained by finding that his rest was not of such a soft nature as he had imagined; there was rock immediately beneath the sparse scrub, and, as shown by the scratches on his barrel, there had been an unexpected kick upwards from the rock. They watched them for some time making for the Araxes, and one was seen to lag behind and limp a little, probably having been wounded by the splash of a bullet from a stone. After this not undeserved misfortune they started back for camp. On the way Kodja pointed out two animals at a distance of about half a mile; they were on the move, apparently having got their wind. Kaloust with his wonderful opera-glass pronounced them to be Moufflon. They were observed to settle about a mile away in a large corrie, and it was decided to follow them up. After about an hour they reached within stalking distance, and D. cautiously approached a rock from which he thought he might get a shot. On looking over, a fair ram and a ewe were to be seen about 150 yards away. Wishing for a nearer shot, D. made for a small ridge giving adequate cover and allowing a

shot at one hundred yards. The Moufflon began to be suspicious and inclined to move, so, resting his elbow on his knee, D. took a somewhat hurried shot, with the result that again he fired too high. After this disaster he had had enough sport for the day, and came into camp a sadder and wiser man, tired and disheartened with his lack of success.

Kaloust thought that by this time nearly all the Ibex had been driven from the easier ground above to the almost inaccessible rocks of the Araxes valley, and advised that half a dozen natives should go to the bottom of the valley by the river and fire into the rocks, in the hope and expectation that the game would be driven out of their fastnesses up into the easier ground above. Though D. was by no means sanguine of success, yet this plan was carried out before daybreak, and D. followed along the tops of the rocks, on the look-out for the approach of any animals that might be driven out. After several hours' waiting a buck was frightened out, and this D. succeeded in rolling over at a distance of about sixty yards. As he expected, he saw several old bucks in the distance come out of almost inaccessible haunts on hearing the firing, but they were far too wily to allow themselves to be driven in the open; they merely took a survey of their surroundings, and then quietly

returned to their retreats. To invade their haunts was far too risky an enterprise, and as the ground had been greatly disturbed and the sun was getting exceedingly hot, D. returned to camp. This method of attempting to secure game, though fairly common and popular in these parts, rarely results in securing anything except a stray doe or buck of tender age, and though allowed by D., it was quite contrary to his convictions formed by previous experience.

The ground in working distance from camp had been by this time considerably disturbed, so it was decided we should return to Nahitchewan. While the pack-horses, etc., quietly took the direct route later on in the morning, D. with his hunters started before daybreak, with the intention of trying for game on the way. They made for a locality called Usund Gullasch, distant about three hours' march. On the way they unexpectedly disturbed three fine bucks, which were seen making the best use of their legs into safer ground. D. finding he was on likely Ibex ground dismissed one of his men, and accompanied by Kaloust and Kodja set to work in earnest. They soon came upon game again, for on spying over the ridge of a large corrie a herd of something was to be seen feeding on the opposite slopes. The animals were so far away that their horns were not to be

distinguished, and they merely appeared as moving specks. Between the herd and D. were a couple of hinds, and having been taught by previous experience, he made a *détour* of about an hour, so as not to disturb them and give them an opportunity of warning the herd. On reaching the place where the herd had last been seen, it was found that they had disappeared. D., however, was rewarded after two hours' search over ground so extremely difficult that he frequently required assistance from his hunters, when Kaloust pointed out a very fine buck feeding about 150 yards away. The rocks here were so steep that it was impossible to get any nearer; indeed, the position from which D. took his shot was such that it could only be made by Kaloust supporting one of his feet on his hand. On firing he saw the beast jump up in the air in a way peculiar to one mortally wounded, and then disappear. On reaching the spot where the animal was lost sight of, another fine buck sprang up, and stood at a distance of about ten yards, not knowing quite which was his safest retreat. Kaloust, who was carrying D.'s gun, suddenly put it up to his shoulder, but lost his chance by having the weapon at half cock. They now found blood on the rocks, and following up the trail, came upon the Ibex D. had shot lying dead in a cavern-

like crevasse. His horn measurement was $36\frac{1}{4}$ inches. After about two hours' laborious descent they got back to their ponies and water. The way the native hunters manage in difficult ground is marvellous, for Kodja, though carrying the Ibex on his back, was



THE BEST HEAD.

able to give D. a helping hand over difficult places. D. made straight for Nahitchewan, a distance of about twenty miles, arriving late in the afternoon very exhausted.

While at Negram-Dagh camp I made two attempts after Ibex. The first time I started out before day-

break with a couple of native hunters, and made my way, or rather my intelligent horse picked his way, in the darkness down a rocky valley towards what I hoped would be likely ground. On reaching it we parted company with the horses and waited for the approaching dawn. When there was sufficient light we advanced, spying out the corries. It was not until later in the morning, on nearing the Araxes, that my hunters picked out a small herd of Ibex feeding and playing amongst some rocks over half a mile away. I counted eight of them through my glass, some of them with fairly good horns. We watched them for about an hour, when they disappeared one by one, and were next seen making for shelter from the rays of the now powerful sun into the shade under a large rock some three or four hundred yards still further on. When they had settled for their mid-day siesta, we followed them up, crossing an exceedingly deep and difficult rocky valley that intervened. When we had got within view of their retreat they had moved on. On cautiously proceeding some little distance we came upon them again. Here one of the hunters left me, while the other brought me up to within about 300 yards of an Ibex quietly moving towards the top of a ridge. I did not attempt a shot, as I hoped to get one at closer range from the ridge over which the Ibex

was evidently about to disappear. I was to be disappointed, for a report of a gun was heard, and my chance of a shot was at an end. On coming up with the other hunter, I found he had got within range of an old doe which had stayed behind with her kid, and unable to restrain himself, had taken his shot, killing them both with the same bullet. I was naturally annoyed, as the hunters had been distinctly told only to use their weapons in self-defence if attacked by brigands, and on no account against game. The culprit thought he had done a meritorious deed, and seemed astonished when I exhibited annoyance instead of delight. He gave me to understand by signs that I was to claim having shot the doe, while he should retain credit for having secured the kid. This honour I strongly declined. It was possibly just as well that I was unable to express my feelings in their dialect, for to judge by their villainous appearance, I should imagine that had I aroused their anger I might have been favoured with the same treatment as the unfortunate doe and kid. The herd was far away by this time, so we made the best of our way back to camp.

The next time I went out I had rather better luck. We made for the valley of the Araxes, and after some three or four hours' work amongst the rocks my hunter spied out a young buck feeding about 150 yards away.

He had not noticed us, so I tied some putties round my boots, and was thus able to lessen the distance by some thirty yards without disturbing him. I thought I was going to get my shot, but he unfortunately moved under the shadow of a rock, leaving only his head and neck in view. I did not care to take my chance at so small a target, so waited about ten minutes in the hope that he would move into open ground. He remained stationary, so we were compelled to take up another position, which exposed his body to view. In doing so I accidentally started a stone rolling. I was afraid my chance was lost, but I was astonished and agreeably surprised to find that he took no notice of it. I got my shot, and was delighted to see him roll over like a log. My hunter was quickly on the spot, and before I could prevent him had cut the beast's throat from ear to ear, after the custom of Mahomedans, who only use as food animals killed by themselves in this fashion. I found I had hit him in the fore part of the chest. The expanded bullet had smashed the opposite shoulder, making an ugly ragged exit wound. We now made our way back, and I was astonished with what marvellous ease my hunter scaled the almost precipitous rocks with the beast tied to his shoulders.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEGRAM-POST.

WE only stayed a couple of days at Nahitchewan, and having said good-bye to Mr. Guest, decided to try our luck again in the Araxes valley. We set out for the Negram-Post, where a detachment of border police are stationed to watch the frontier, preserve order, and prevent smuggling. On the way we passed through an Armenian village, the chief industry of which consisted in the male inhabitants dressing themselves up as priests and imposing upon the surrounding villages by officiating in that capacity. Christopher, David, and Grant, with a reduced caravan, started about mid-day; D., with two captains and myself, followed about three hours after, and arrived at the post about seven o'clock in the evening, shortly after the baggage. We pitched camp quite close to the post, and as it was some time before the tents would be pitched and a meal prepared, we amused ourselves by watching some of the border police fishing in the

river. Their method was to drag a net attached to two poles up and down the river; the man who worked at the end farthest from the bank waded waist-deep for some distance up-stream, and then wheeled into the bank. Their haul contained several



RUSSIAN FRONTIER POST, NEGRAM.

fish unlike any seen in English waters; there were several resembling diminutive sharks in appearance, called *som*. They are said to grow to a great size, and have been known to attack human beings. There was one fish larger than any of the others; though it weighed about twenty pounds, and was

estimated to be over 100 years old, it was quite a youngster, for this species grows to a very large size, and is said to attain an age of over 700 years. Although it had already lived for a considerable number of years, it was quite edible. The haul



ON THE PERSIAN FRONTIER.

showed several other kinds of fish, including some which greatly resemble our perch.

D. had by this time found out which of the native hunters were of any use, and had brought with him, besides the well-proven Kaloust and Kodja, another—Kaffa by name. D. went out three times while

in camp here. The Negram-Post is situated close to the river at an open part of the Araxes valley, just before it becomes more gorge-like and rocky. The valley does not open out again until beyond the Doroscham-Post, some ten versts down the river and a little way above Julfa. Extending from the Negram-Post, and running parallel to the Araxes valley to the north of it, is another large valley some five or six miles in length and three or four miles wide. As this immense corrie has the north side of the Araxes rocks on the slope and equally good rocky ground on the other, it is traversed and intersected by numerous rocky ridges, and as there is very fair pasturage it was considered a very likely spot where Ibex might be found feeding in the early morning previous to retiring to the difficult rocks along the Araxes.

On the first day D. started out before daybreak, taking with him Kaloust and Kaffa, and made for the wide valley to the north of the Araxes rocks. Just at dawn, while still riding up the valley, they caught sight of three rather good Ibex on the move at a distance of only about 200 yards away, evidently having been disturbed by them. Although they immediately dismounted and kept perfectly quiet, the animals did not settle down again, but dis-

appeared over the farthest ridge. Game seemed somewhat plentiful here, for very soon another herd of eight Ibex were seen amongst the rocks on the side of the valley away from the Araxes. They were a long way off, and it was decided to leave



OUR HOME, PERSIAN FRONTIER.

them for another time, so they continued their course through the pastures up the valley, making for some rocks on the right in the direction of the Araxes, as it was thought that finer heads might be found there. After three hours' ascent, with continual breaks for observation, they reached the top of the rocks without having seen anything more. Most of the Ibex had by this time retired from the pastures,

and sought shelter amongst the rocks from the now powerful sun. After lunching on the top of the ridge, Kaloust pointed out a buck estimated from the size of his horns to be about eight years old; he was making his way up from the Araxes rocks to the high pastures above. They lay perfectly still, and he was so innocent of all danger that he passed within 120 yards of them. Although D. gave him both barrels without any effect, he did not appear to know where the danger lay, and still continued his course upwards. D. now ran to a boulder which cut the animal off, and he was able to get another shot in at about 150 yards whilst the animal stood still wondering which course to take, and a second shot when he was on the move—both misses. They saw nothing else that day, and got back to camp about noon.

Next day D. started about 2.30, taking with him Kaloust and Kodja, and rode for about six versts along the bank of the river. They then dismounted, and after an hour's climb reached about a quarter of the way up the rocky slope. Making their way over the ravines and intervening rocky ridges in the direction of the Doroscham-Post, they saw several Ibex, which at this still early hour of the morning had already returned from the pasturage to their retreats. The animals

looked down on them from the rocks above, but did not appear to be greatly alarmed, for they merely stood still and made the peculiar soft trumpeting noise which they usually give forth when disturbed. They evidently realized that they were comparatively safe in their almost impregnable fastnesses. About ten in the morning, when they had reached the rocks above the Doroscham-Post, a very fine buck was seen coming up into the rocks in stalkable ground from the river below. D. rapidly crossed an intervening corrie and made for the shelter of a rock which afforded a shot at about 120 yards. Although a considerable noise had been made by the rolling stones, yet the animal had not been disturbed, and was quietly and unconcernedly climbing the opposite ridge. D. now took his chance, and was pleased to see that, by the way the animal jumped, he was badly hit. The intervening ground was very difficult for D. to cover rapidly in his nailed boots; so instructing Kaloust to follow the wounded animal up, he waited breathless, and was soon rewarded by seeing the man making signs of joy and beckoning to him. D.'s shot had been rather far back; it had traversed the fore part of the abdomen and made on exit a very severe wound, smashing a couple of ribs. He was a very fine buck, probably nine years old; his horns

taped $38\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and had a span of 15 inches. After this they descended to the Doroscham-Post, and followed the Araxes river back to the Negram-Post.

The third and last stalk here was unsuccessful and short, as a return to Nahitchevan was included in



IBEX ROCKS OVERLOOKING THE ARAXES VALLEY.

the day's work. D., taking Kaloust and Kodja, made for the high rocks and pastures of the valley to the north of the Araxes gorge, and seeing nothing, he returned to camp about 10 a.m.

While at the Negram-Post I went out each of the three days we were there. The first day I took

with me Grant and Kodja—one of the native hunters. We struck out away from the Araxes into comparatively easy stalking ground. After about four hours' walking and spying, having seen nothing except a Fox, we turned back for camp. As the large valley previously mentioned, lying to the north of the Araxes rocks, lay in our direction, we decided to try our luck there, although with no great expectations, as, unfortunately, we had a steady wind blowing at our backs. On reaching the farther side of the valley Grant and I directed our telescopes to the numerous rocky corries at the bottom, but before we had sighted game, Kodja, with his unaided eye, picked out a herd of seven Ibex. Through the glass it was found to consist of does and kids only. However, on further search Grant made out another herd of eight drinking at a spring close to a dried-up stream near the bottom of the valley. He thought three of the herd were bucks, so after watching them settle down for their morning rest on the far side of a ridge about 1000 yards away, we decided to attempt a stalk. The intervening ground was steep and difficult, and made a descent of something like 500 feet necessary. We succeeded in reaching the ridge, and found them lying down at the foot of the rocks, about 150 yards below us. They now stood

up and showed evident signs of uneasiness, and getting a bit excited I failed to pick out the best horns, but pulled off at the best which afforded the easiest shot. I evidently had hit it badly, for it lagged behind the others, making frequent stops. My disgust was great when Grant, who was watching the beast through his glass, said I had shot a doe. I followed her up and despatched her at close quarters. It was not surprising that they showed uneasiness, for the wind was behind us, and their position was such that to approach them from leeward would have involved a very extensive circuit, and even then with a great probability of failure, owing to the open nature of the ground. I was surprised that they had not winded us earlier, but explained it by the fact that they were lying under the ridge, and that our wind was carried over them until we got close up.

Next day one of the Russian captains and I went out together, taking with us Grant and Kaffa. We went part of the way up the big valley, and then laboriously ascended the south slope and gained the rocky ridge which commanded a view of the Araxes gorge. Kaffa saw an Ibex disappear amongst rocks so precipitous that we decided not to follow.

I now parted company with the captain, and, taking

Kaffa with me, descended amongst the boulders. After three or four hours' difficult climbing, Kaffa's wonderfully keen eyes picked out a couple of Ibex. He signed for me to follow him, and after running the risk of nearly breaking my neck every minute, I found myself on the ledge of a rock, beyond which was a sheer drop of about 100 yards. We could see nothing, but Kaffa, feeling sure he had located them rightly, threw a stone down, whereupon an Ibex came out from under us and stood exposed to our view, not knowing what the noise meant. Looking down upon the beast, I was unable to get a good view of its horns or distinguish its sex. I appealed to Kaffa, but he only showed impatience for me to shoot; so hanging over the ledge, with Kaffa holding on to my legs, I aimed at the beast's back, taking what I thought to be a fine sight on account of the perpendicularity of the shot.

My shot told very effectively, for the beast rolled like a log for a considerable distance down amongst the rocks. Kaffa felt convinced there was another somewhere below us out of sight, and on throwing a second stone down another Ibex appeared on a ledge a little way off. I fired and missed, but in spite of all this noise the animal stood still for some time, not knowing whence the danger came and in what

direction safety lay. I loaded again, but my position was such an awkward one that I lost a considerable amount of time, and when I was again ready, the beast had made up his mind to move, and had put a ridge between us.

The Ibex I had shot had fallen so far down, that it took us quite half an hour to climb down to it. My disappointment was great to find that again I had shot a doe.

The expansive bullet had gone through the neck, smashing the spine and making a fearful exit wound of about three inches in diameter. Kaffa was unable to carry the animal; indeed, it was as much as we could do to climb down to the Araxes ourselves, but he succeeded in getting it down by pushing it into the ravines and letting it roll down.

We got back to camp after about ten hours of the hardest work I have ever experienced. The captain and Grant came into camp soon after us both very exhausted. They also had got into very precipitous ground, and had some difficulty in getting out of it.

Grant, who had had fifteen years of Scottish stalking, said he had never been in such straits before, and quite thought that it was all up with him, and that he would never see bonnie Scotland again.

The last day we were here, taking Kaffa with me,

I set off about three for the north side of the big valley. After reaching its farthest end we made for a ridge, and on cautiously peeping over into a large ravine, Kaffa intimated that there were Ibex feeding on the slope. The light was still too bad for me to see anything with my untrained eyes, but in the still morning air I could distinctly hear some animals feeding. After a few minutes I began to see shadowy forms a little over 100 yards away, but I was quite unable to distinguish males from females.

I lay perfectly still for some time, straining my eyes to pick out an animal worthy of a bullet. The wind was right for us, and we had made no noise, but they began to get suspicious, probably having seen my head peeping over the rock. They stopped feeding, and trotted up the side of the corrie for about 100 yards, and then stood at the foot of some rocks which rose up some 600 feet.

As the males now began their soft trumpeting, I knew they were becoming alarmed, and though my chance at this comparatively long range of 200 yards in a bad light was a poor one, I was afraid I should not get a better opportunity, so I blazed away, producing no more serious result than thoroughly alarming them. We came upon two more Ibex that day, but they saw us first, and judiciously made off.

About noon we bade farewell to the Araxes valley, and made our way back to Nahitchevan, travelling so slowly on account of the intense heat, that we did not arrive at our destination until late in the evening. Though we were well satisfied with our success in these regions, we felt it had only been achieved by arduous work and submitting to fair discomfort. For the last fortnight ours had been anything but a bed of roses. In the daytime the heat was too great to be pleasant, reaching well over 90° in the tent, our only retreat from the scorching rays of the July sun; while the night brought very little relief, for the thermometer only showed a slight fall. Our water supply here was by no means satisfactory. At this time of the year springs were few and far between on these arid hills, and we were compelled to rely on our water-bottles. It was quite an unusually lucky event to find a spring reduced by now to a mere trickle of water from some fissure in the rocks. Our supply while in camp was drawn from the river Araxes, and as its tepid water was somewhat of the consistency of pea-soup, due to the large amount of sediment carried along in its rapid course, it was only a thirst of some considerable intensity that reconciled us to our liquid refreshment. Naturally the vegetation in these waterless regions

was by no means luxuriant. It consisted of coarse, sparse, dried-up grass, forming happy hunting ground for the numerous lizards which preyed upon the grasshoppers heard and seen everywhere. Here and there amongst the rocks were to be found several different kinds of shrub-like herbs, which gave forth strong and pungent aromas of a nature new to me. In the immediate neighbourhood of the river vegetation was naturally more prolific, and along its bank afforded shelter for large numbers of frogs and tortoises of the ordinary varieties. The muddy banks of the river itself were decorated by crabs of the same brilliant hues as seen on the swampy banks of some of the East African rivers.

Here in camp the mosquitoes were, if possible, more troublesome than at Nahitchevan. If at night we exposed the smallest part of our bodies, a very difficult thing to avoid doing owing to the heat, we were sure to find the exposed part covered with irritating bumps, which, if scratched, were very prone to fester. It was only the last night here that we had a decent night's rest. We baffled our tormentors by sleeping in the open on the roof of the post, forming the quarters of the border police. Here, taking up our beds, we joined the two captains, who by virtue of the odour peculiar to their "burkas,"

which they spread out to sleep on, considered themselves free from the attacks of all vermin. Although we were fortunate enough to avoid coming in disagreeable contact with snakes and scorpions, said to be plentiful, we had an opportunity of examining a *Phalynx*, which had only been captured after it had bitten one of the soldiers, and produced an inflammatory swelling of considerable severity. This insect was something of the nature of a large spider, but was armed with two pairs of strong, sharp, formidable-looking nippers, which were seen to act with deadly effect on any other insect which came within its reach. By no means the least of the evils is malarial fever; it attacks the majority of those who visit these parts, and undermines the health of anyone who is so unfortunate as to be compelled to stay any length of time. As regards food, one must rely entirely upon one's own commissariat, for such simple articles of diet as eggs, milk, or butter are hardly to be obtained at any price. Notwithstanding the many discomforts that one had to endure, a keen sportsman, I think, would find ample reward in the possibility of success.

During our stays at Nahitchewan we were attended to by an Armenian. Enoch was his name, and he occupied some social distinction amongst his brethren. Even Enoch showed his true Armenian nature, and

belied the name he bore, for D. was not allowed to escape his clutches till he had paid something like ten times the amount that a man with such a name ought to have charged. As there was nothing to detain us, we only stayed one night at Nahitchewan, and by seven o'clock the following morning we were on our way to Erivan. We made rather poor travelling, and did not arrive at our destination until seven in the evening.

This was partly due to a delay early on in the day caused by one of the wheels parting company with our carriage. Owing to the accident we were compelled to finish the journey in a springless vehicle, which made us regret the luxury of the carriage we had been obliged to abandon. At one of the villages we saw a band of brigands who had been recently captured in the district, and who, chained together, were on the march under a strong escort of Russian soldiers.

We again put up at the Club Hotel. This hotel, though commodious and well-built, was very badly managed. The want of promptness in the attendance was only equalled by the dirtiness which accompanied it, so after one day's rest here we started off for Akstafa, *en route* for Tiflis. At one of the posts Prince Nakaschidze, who had shown D. such attention while at Erivan, was there to meet us, having ridden

from his country seat, Daratchitchag, a distance of forty versts, to show this courtesy. Although we did the 176 versts in the extremely good time of about fourteen hours, it was only accomplished by frequently urging on our somewhat tardy coachman. In fact, during one stage our Jehu stopped his horses, got down from his seat, and casually strolled round. Language appeared to have no effect on him, and he was only induced to resume his position and proceed on D.'s energetic demonstration. The only mild excitement during the journey was when we once came in collision with a bullock and his driver with such force that the bullock, driver, and one of our horses went down in a confused heap. Our coachman appeared to consider that no blame was attached to himself, for he sprang down and vigorously attacked the prostrate man with his whip, compelling him to jump up, leave his bullock, and fly from the avenging wrath of his chastiser.

There was no regular train to Tiflis for some hours, so D. had wired for a special, which after giving us about two hours' wait, started about 11 o'clock p.m. and brought us into Tiflis at 2 a.m. We quickly made our way to the Hotel de Londres, weary, travel-stained, and presenting a most disreputable appearance in general.

THIRD HUNTING EXPEDITION
IN THE
Kouban District of the Caucasus.

THE KOUBAN DISTRICT.

WE got back to Tiflis on the 8th of August, according to the Russian calendar, and had some eight or nine days to dispose of before we were to leave for the Kouban district, as D. had arranged to meet Mr. Littledale, who was to join us about the 20th of August (1st of September English date) at Battal-paschinsk, a village within reach of our hunting ground.

We spent the intervening time at Tiflis, and here Madame Demidoff joined her husband with the intention of accompanying him on the forthcoming expedition. Having sent David, the cook, with the baggage on the evening of the 15th, we followed at five o'clock on the morning of the 17th. The first part of our journey was by post to Vladikavkas along

the great Georgian road across the main range of the Caucasus, a distance of 200 versts. This road is a marvellous piece of engineering, constructed by the Russian authorities for military purposes. In places it has been cut out of the solid rock, so that on one



ON THE GEORGIAN ROAD.

side of the road the beetling rock frowns down upon one, while on the other side a precipitous fall to the mountain torrent beneath suggests cautious progression. At first the country was comparatively flat and fairly well wooded. As we approached the main range high wooded hills rose up on either side, while near

the excellent road along which we were travelling the rocky nature of the country showed itself by the occasional outcrops which raised themselves up almost perpendicularly, showing their varied stratification.

About forty versts before we reached the pass which



VALLEY OF THE TEREK, GEORGIAN ROAD.

conducted us over the range, we commenced the ascent of a valley with high hills, heavily wooded in places, converging on either side. Above the timber line were to be seen the high pastures which, from their verdure, apparently afforded good feeding ground for the cattle which were to be seen grazing there. Below

the woods were extensive tracts of corn, on which the natives were to be seen busily employed in harvesting. At the bottom of the valley, rushing and leaping over its rocky bed, was a mountain torrent of considerable size, fed by the melting snows seen lying in the deeper corries above.

Having zigzagged up to the highest part of the Pass of the Cross, so called from the general formation, here, a height of 7694 feet, we now caught a distant glimpse of the snow-clad peaks of the Kasbeck Mountains. In several places the peaks rose up so sheer above the road, that it had been found necessary to roof it in with massive timber beams to protect travellers from the avalanches of snow which are precipitated down in winter time; and early in our descent from the pass workmen were seen completely covering in the road for a distance of about two miles, to ensure keeping it open and safe all the year round. Close here we came upon a spring, famous for its strongly chalybeate waters, which ran over the rocks for a considerable area, staining them with its characteristic ochre colour. Continuing our descent down the valley, which was flanked by majestic rocky peaks and ridges, suggestive of the haunts of the Ibex, we arrived at the Kasbeck Post, and here obtained a comparatively near view of

the Kasbeck main peak. Inside the post house were to be seen some very fine specimens of the horns and skins of the *Capra Pallasii*, the wild goat peculiar to this district.

From the thickness of the hair on the skins they had evidently been procured in winter, when the animals come down from their fastnesses above to the easy stalking ground below in search of food; indeed, the surrounding ridges, bristling with perpendicular rocky spurs, would afford such shelter that only the keenest and most daring sportsman would attempt to stalk agile goats in their lofty summer retreats. As we still further descended the valley the mountains on either side converged until at the Daryal Pass it became gorge-like; here the rocks rise up sheer on either side, leaving only sufficient room at the bottom for the torrent, by this time of considerable size, and our road cut out of the face of the rock. After leaving the pass the country began to open out, and before we reached Vladikavkas it had become quite flat and uninteresting.

It was 10 p.m., so quite dark, when we drove through Vladikavkas on our way to the station, consequently one's impression of the town was limited to the knowledge that it was a place of considerable size, possessing some houses of handsome and pretentious construction

and shops of modern style. The next part of our journey was by rail to Nevinominsk; and as it was still two hours before our train started, we availed ourselves of the fare, such as it was, to be obtained in the barn-like refreshment-room attached to the station. We left Vladikavkas at midnight, and the sleeping accommodation was so excellent and the movement so smooth, that we did not wake until we found ourselves at Nevinominsk at nine o'clock in the morning. On the platform were two hunters of the Grand Duke Sergius Mikhaïlovitch, who had been sent by His Highness to meet D. and accompany him on the expedition. A Cossack officer informed us that David, with our baggage and an Englishman, evidently Mr. Littledale, had passed through on his way to Battalpaschinsk the night before.

Having partaken of a light breakfast in the clean and well-arranged refreshment-room here, we were quickly on our way driving to Battalpaschinsk, a distance of 50 versts. We changed horses at a village about half-way, and appeared to be of some interest to the villagers, who turned out in force to see us. On leaving it we passed over the River Kouban, the sources of which we hoped to become well acquainted with and afford us happy hunting grounds. As we approached Battalpaschinsk we passed

through large tracts of meadow-land, the grass of which had been cut and already stacked in large cocks. Here and there peasants had apparently revenged themselves for wrongs, imaginary or otherwise, by setting alight the hay, as evidenced by the blackened



OUR RUSSIAN HUNTERS, ERMOLENKO AND KROUTENKO.

patch in place of the stack. A large area was under the cultivation of millet, one of the staple foods of the natives. We entered Battalpaschinsk about noon by again crossing the River Kouban, here divided up into numerous branches. There was no hotel in the place, so the Attaman of the district, Colonel B——, had arranged for one of the inhabitants to let his

house for our accommodation. The Colonel's idea of sport was upon a somewhat colossal scale. He appeared to think that in order to ensure success it was necessary to take the field in large numbers and attack the game by volley firing. He had accordingly arranged to supply something like fifty hunters and a large escort of Cossacks. D. gave him to understand he preferred stalking with as few attendants as possible, and that these gigantic preparations were not only unnecessary, but would absolutely prevent any chance of success; consequently arrangements were made on a reasonably proportionate scale.

We stayed three days at Battalpaschinsk before proceeding into the mountains. There was a Cossack camp some eight versts from the town, where the Cossacks spend some weeks under canvas every year, and as D. and Mr. Littledale wished to test their rifles, we drove out to the now unoccupied camp and had a little practice.

D. was using Purdey's double-barrelled .303, .450, and .500 express rifles, with the Lee-Metford cartridge for the former modified by slits in the nickel-plate to cause expansion, and charged with rifleite; whilst Mr. Littledale relied almost entirely on the smaller-bore sporting Mannlicher, a rifle the stock of which was rather different and considerably lighter than the

regulation pattern. A temporary target was erected, and, as might have been expected, the single-barrelled Mannlicher gave more accurate practice than any of D.'s double-barrelled rifles.

The Caucasian stags are extremely difficult to find in their sylvan retreats, except during the three or four weeks of the rutting period, when their "calls" enable one to locate them, and their excited state renders them bold and reckless before any enemy. Hunters by producing an imitation of the beast's "call" can induce a response from any stag in the neighbourhood, who thinks he is challenged; moreover, by this means the "calling" season can be anticipated by several days. Mr. Littledale had brought with him some toy instruments which helped to produce the "call"; their effect was tried on a tame two-and-a-half-year-old stag, with the result that the beast attempted to enter the house in which the call was made. Before leaving Battalpaschinsk we went for a long walk to get our muscles into a little better condition. A very heavy thunderstorm overtook us, and compelled us to seek shelter in a hut occupied by five Cossacks. Their one compartment was only about 10 ft. by 6 ft., and possessed no furniture, unless one might dignify by that name the bare shelves upon which the men slept. Their staple food consisted of a mass having

the appearance of dried bran-mash ; this we were told was bread, which was made edible by being soaked in water. The hut formed very little protection against the storm, and it was with some difficulty that one avoided the streams of water which came through the roof and soaked into the earth floor. Though existence with these natives was devoid of all comfort, they appeared cheerful and contented with their lot. When we arrived back at Battalpaschinsk, owing to the absence of drainage of any kind, the streets were converted into rivers, and we were compelled to wade through water to reach our abode.

Our first ground was to be the Zellentchuk valley ; there is a road for 80 versts to a monastery at the lower end of the valley, so it was decided to drive there, stay one night, and start the next morning with a pack-horse caravan which was to meet us there. On the 20th of August David, the cook, accompanied by the two hunters sent by the Grand Duke and Mr. Littledale's attendant, started off with three baggage wagons. We followed early next morning in our more rapid carriages. We had not gone far before the gigantic snow-clad mass, Mount Elbruz, free from the mists which later in the day obscure it, showed up clear against the cloudless sky. We changed horses twice, the first time at Elburgan,

a village where we were joined by the Attaman and the Government Forest-Inspector, the second time in the open country, where a monk from the monastery had ridden out to meet us and give us a preliminary blessing. On the way we were entertained in the usual manner by the Cossacks who escorted us, and vied with one another in their equestrian feats. As we approached the monastery and began to ascend the valley, the vegetation on all sides became more prolific. On either side of the road were to be seen such familiar flora as wild raspberries, strawberries, currants, nettles, thistles, hops, and sun-flowers, whilst the slopes were well wooded with beeches, nut trees, and other well-known species. Higher up the hills were darkened by the closely-set pine trees, the straight trunks of which raised themselves to a lofty height with unfailing regularity. Conspicuous were gigantic *Umbelliferæ*, standing some ten feet high, and forming a striking contrast to the more familiar vegetation around. On reaching the monastery, D. and his wife were received by the Father Superior and conducted into the chapel, where all the priests, assembled in full vestments, held a choral service for their special edification. Although there was no organ, the voices harmonized perfectly, and the constant succession of semitones in *crescendo* and

diminuendo produced a somewhat striking and weird effect. We became the guests of the Father Superior, and received the attention and hospitality which their frugal mode of living afforded. Close to the monastery are ruins of two ancient churches; they date back



MONASTERY AT ZELLENTCHUK.

somewhere between the fourth and seventh centuries, and give evidence of Grecian origin. The packmen and horses had arrived, also a considerable number of hunters, eight of whom, three Russians and five Mahomedan natives, D. selected to take with him. The following morning there was a slight delay in

starting. The packmen said that owing to the difficulty of the road their horses would not be able to carry the 200 lbs. estimated as a reasonable load for each horse, so two more men and four more horses had to be procured before we could start. Our caravan now consisting of twenty-two pack-horses led by eleven



RUINS OF ANCIENT CHURCH IN THE ZELLENTCHUK VALLEY.

men besides ourselves, the hunters and other attendants moved up the valley for a government house used by foresters twenty-two versts distant. On the way we saw the further remains of Greek architecture, showing evidence that at some early period there had been a Greek town in this valley. The Father Superior accompanied us, and on reaching a hut half-way up,

entertained us with an excellent dish of trout, caught and prepared whilst we waited. We spent the night in the forester's house, a commodious wooden building recently erected, and situated on a park-like plateau surrounded by an amphitheatre of lofty pine-clad hills.

On the following morning D., Mr. Littledale, and I attempted stalks in different directions. D. tried his luck up a valley bearing the very awkward name of Khyzdysch, as Tûr and Chamois were reported to have been seen there recently. He started out at 4.30, and taking with him two of the natives, one an agile, sharp-looking fellow of the name of Mazan, rode for about twelve versts up the valley. He now dismounted, and on proceeding came across fresh tracks of both Bear and Wild-boar. He ascended the hill on the left side of the valley; the slope was so steep and lofty, that it was something like three hours before he reached the timber line and came upon likely-looking tûr ground. He saw four Chamois on the opposite side of a large corrie, but as he was out after the finer and larger Tûr, he left them alone and made for the snow-covered rocks higher up. Although he carefully examined several corries which looked as though they ought to yield sport, he saw nothing, not even tracks.

On the other side of the valley was a splendid

glacier, and on the highest pastures, which extended right up to it, large herds of horses and cattle were to be seen feeding.

D. was compelled to return to camp unsuccessful. Mr. Littledale was more fortunate; he managed to



GOVERNMENT FORESTER'S HOUSE.

secure a couple of Chamois—one a very fair head. I myself, accompanied by one of the Russian hunters, tried my luck on one of the nearer hills. We ascended about 2000 feet, passing through pine woods, where we saw tracks of bears which had been feeding in the raspberry fields earlier in the morning.

On getting above the timber line we came across abundant tracks of chamois, and made out through the glass a buck on the opposite side of a large corrie, about 1000 yards away. He appeared to have seen us, for after looking in our direction for some minutes, he posted himself on a point of greater vantage, and appeared to be keeping a sharp look-out.

Though the wind was right, I did not consider the openness of the ground permitted a direct approach; so descending again into the rhododendra and birches, we crossed the corrie lower down and made a wide *dé-tour* to get above and behind him. After about two hours' walking, when we caught sight of him again, he was still in the same position, and had so far recovered from suspicion as to lie down.

In ascending on the opposite side of the corrie to get above him, we passed within about 400 yards to windward, and he must have scented us, for on approaching the spot he had been lying down on from above, and cautiously looking over the ridge, he had disappeared.

Rain now came on, so we decided to return. On the way back through the pine woods the hunter saw a Bear, which, disturbed by the noise we could not avoid making amongst dead wood, made off before I could get a view of him.

We stayed another night at the forester's house, and having said good-bye to the Father Superior and the Forest-Inspector, proceeded on our way up the Zellentchuk valley for a distance of about 20 versts, and camped at an elevation of 5000 feet



PREPARATIONS FOR THE START.

near its sources. At the head of the valley the Psysch mountain raises its steep white peak to a height of 12,000 feet, and on its valley side bears a glacier of considerable size.

The track up to our camping ground was so difficult in places that several of the horses fell with their

loads, and both packmen and horses required a little encouragement before the caravan reached our camping ground in safety.

We arrived at the Psysch camp on the evening of the 24th, and stayed until the morning of the 27th. While here D. only went out once, taking with him as his chief hunter an elderly native, but a man of great experience, named Nagoï; he went towards the main range. After about four hours' ascent he reached the high ground, where he hoped to find Tûr. He investigated five likely-looking corries springing from the main range, but saw no sign of game; and it was not to be wondered at, for in all directions where there was any pasture, sheep, with the accompanying shepherds' camps or *kosches*, were to be seen. D. had a magnificent view of the peaks of the main range, one of which, he thought, reminded him very strongly of the Little Matterhorn. He returned to camp, and on his way saw evidence of Deer, as shown by fresh tracks and recently-vacated seats, also numerous tracks of Bear. Mr. Littledale went out once and returned with a Chamois. I went out both days we were here.

On the first day, taking with me another of the Russian hunters, I started out on horseback and crossed the river, here running through swampy ground and

divided up into about six streams. When we reached the far side of the streams, the intelligent horses found their way back alone to the attendants waiting on the other side. After ascending for about 3000 feet, we reached the ground we had decided to explore. Although we were walking and spying for nearly the



NAGOÏ, A FAVOURITE HUNTER.

whole day, we saw nothing except droppings of Chamois and the track of a Tûr which had been feeding in the high pastures earlier in the morning and had recently returned to the rocks above. On coming back, we noticed on the sand near the river the spoor of a Stag which had been down to drink. We were unable to make ourselves heard in camp, and

so procure horses to carry us across the river, so we had to rely upon our own legs. I was nearly carried off my feet by the rush of water, and found walking barefooted on the uneven stones through ice-cold water anything but agreeable. However, I reached camp none the worse for my experience. On the second day I tried the neighbouring hills on the camp side of the river, ground Mr. Littledale had gone over on the previous day. On getting above the pine woods, I saw a large Bear about 500 yards away, quietly walking from me towards a ridge which soon hid him from sight. I made for the ridge as rapidly as possible, but the Bear had disappeared, in all probability into wooded ground a few hundred yards below. After working likely-looking chamois ground for two or three hours without seeing anything more than tracks, on my way back to camp I descended through several large raspberry fields, which showed very evidently that Bruin had recently enjoyed himself there. As there was little or no game to be disturbed here, D. thought a few cartridges might be spared for some rifle practice. A target was put up, and as the hunters joined in, one had an opportunity of comparing the accuracy of ancient and modern weapons. The hunters had old muzzle-loading flint-locks, with absurdly small stocks and

long barrels. Although they used a mechanical rest fixed on to the fore end of the stock, their practice was by no means good. Even at 100 yards they only occasionally found the target. This poor display was not to be wondered at, for their ammunition as well as their guns was of the crudest kind. It was only after the powder had fizzed in the pan for some moments that the gun fired, and misfires were exceedingly frequent. We struck camp about noon the next morning, 27th August, and descended the Zellentchuk valley as far as the junction of the Arkhyz and Zellentchuk streams, then turning up the Arkhyz valley, ascended for about six versts and pitched our camp at about three o'clock in the afternoon on the right-hand slope, at the foot of a high range of hills called the Kiafar hills. We stayed here until the 31st, and D. went out all three days.

The range of hills at the foot of which we were now camping extended for about twelve versts, and rose somewhat abruptly to a height of 3000 feet from the stream. The lower slopes were well wooded, while above the timber line was fair pasturage, with wild and rocky ground extending upwards to the tooth-like ridge of the range above. On the far, or north side, the range was very bare and rocky, and

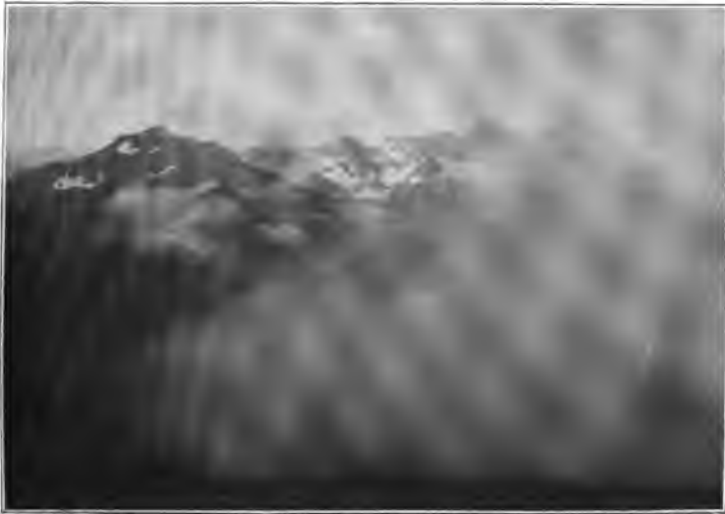
descended precipitously to the irregular ground below. The genial rays of the sun acted for such a short time in the day, that tracks of eternal snow extended steeply to the valley below, whilst the deeper corries were filled in so as to form steep and dangerous



PITCHING CAMP IN THE ARKHYZ VALLEY.

snowshoots. From this range, running at right angles, were three rugged rocky ridges with correspondingly irregular valleys lying between. Here vegetation was so scarce, and the ground so broken, that the ubiquitous herds of cattle and sheep were fortunately absent, and it looked as if our perseverance was to be rewarded at last.

On the first day D., taking Nagoï with him as his chief hunter, started at four o'clock, accompanied by Mr. Littledale. They ascended the hills and made for a saddle on the range opposite the camp. Before reaching the summit they saw a single Tûr which had



IN THE HILLS.

been feeding on the camp side, and was now returning to its safer haunts on the far side of the range. On reaching the saddle D. parted company with Mr. Littledale, and struck off along the range to the west, whilst Mr. Littledale went eastwards. After following the range for about an hour he gained one of the big ridges running at right angles, and

soon spied a male Tûr amongst the high rocks. He attempted to stalk him by making for the top of a peak above the animal; on reaching his point of vantage and looking down, the beast had disappeared. The only explanation D. could give for his disappearance was that he must have seen the glint of the sun on the barrel of his rifle when at a distance of about 500 yards, for the wind was right, and they had not made sufficient noise in approaching to have disturbed him. On following the ridge in the hopes of seeing the Tûr again, he came upon four Chamois feeding about 200 yards below. They had not been disturbed; and as one of them was a good buck, and there were no Tûr to be seen in the corrie, he stalked them, and secured the buck at 100 yards. He now followed the ridge, and saw nothing until after about three hours, when he picked out three Tûr about 800 yards away amongst the rocks on the opposite side of a large corrie. The wind was right and steady, so he attempted a direct stalk. The near slope of the corrie was somewhat open, and he was compelled to descend to the bottom of it in full sight; however, by crawling and avoiding the snow-patches, he managed to get within 400 yards without disturbing them. The opposite slope was sufficiently broken for him to ascend to within 200 yards under

cover. He now heard the stones rolling about him, showing that they were on the move and the direction they were taking. He hurriedly made for a rock which would command their line of retreat, and was delighted to find that they were coming towards him. They came on so slowly that D. was able to sufficiently recover his breath to hit the first at a distance of sixty yards. They appeared so wanting in ability to locate sound that the wounded one still approached, followed by the other two, and D. now grassed the third and best of the three. The second one made off, escaping a parting shot as he disappeared over the ridge. The third beast was found lying dead a few yards away, and had a very good head, measuring $33\frac{1}{2}$ inches along the outer curve and $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches in girth. The first one shot, though badly hit, was seen to be moving slowly over a snow-patch some distance above. A thunderstorm came on just then, so he was not followed up that day, but was brought in by one of the hunters on the following morning, having been found dead not far from that spot. On returning to camp D. met Mr. Littledale, whose trophy for the day consisted of a fair-sized Bear.

On the following day D., accompanied by his wife and Mr. Littledale, crossed the saddle and

made for the middle ridge running at right angles to the range. On spying, they found a Chamois lying on the snow at the bottom of a corrie. Madame Demidoff was anxious to secure one herself, so under the guidance of Mr. Littledale she attempted the stalk. Unfortunately, owing to the force of the wind, she was unsuccessful. They saw three other Chamois lying on the snow, but they were in such an unstalkable position that the only possible way of approaching them was in full view. A stalk was attempted, but, as was to be expected, the animals saw them and made off. D. in the meanwhile, after watching and spying for a couple of hours, heard some stones rolling, and then saw a Tûr descending a spur on the opposite side of the corrie. The beast was coming in his direction, but was disturbed by seeing a hunter who had taken a horse to bring back the Tûr shot on the previous day. D. attempted to follow him, but in climbing along a rocky spur had a narrow escape from a serious accident. On negotiating an awkward corner, he was helping himself round with his alpenstock, when the point slipped, and he fell a distance of about twenty feet, rolling over several times. He fortunately caught hold of and clung to a projecting piece of rock just in time to prevent a sheer fall of about 1000 feet.

He was soon rescued from his precarious position, fortunately having received no serious injury. The Tûr made good his escape, and D., having had sufficient excitement for one day, returned to camp.

On the third day D. and Mr. Littledale again crossed the range, and both followed the ridge to the eastward. They spied out a large corrie, but saw nothing, and as the wind did not remain constant for ten consecutive minutes they returned to camp.

I went out all three days we were here. On the first day I was accompanied by an aged forester, whose chief reason for accompanying the expedition was that he was the owner of the cow which supplied us with milk, and, it may be added, only at his hands.

We crossed the river Arkhyz, and ascended the lower wooded hills on the opposite side of the Arkhyz valley. On getting above the timber line and reaching the high pastures, we soon came to the conclusion that we need not expect to find Tûr or Chamois, for sheep and horses



GOVERNMENT FOREST-KEEPER, KOUBAN.

were to be seen everywhere. We made for a *kosch*, where three shepherds with their dogs were encamped. They received us with marked hospitality, and entertained us with their best. Their fire was coaxed into a blaze, and soon ribs of mutton were roasted, and millet seed boiled for our benefit. Curds and sour milk followed. On leaving, all offers of recompense were stoutly refused; this was the more surprising, as these hardy mountain shepherds are of the poorest class. On returning through the woods we saw many tracks of Bear, and recent evidences of Deer as shown by the freshly-broken and nibbled branches and quite fresh droppings. We attempted to follow up the track, but without any success, as it was almost impossible to approach unheard in the dense woods, except when the stags are calling during the rutting season, which had not yet commenced. On the second day, accompanied by the forester and one of the Russian hunters, I tried my luck on the ground beyond the Kiafar hills. On reaching the crest of the range we saw three Chamois 1000 yards off, feeding on a plateau on the central ridge, running at right angles to the range. Though there was a difficult valley in a direct line between us and our quarry, we decided to make straight across, instead of following the main range to its junction with the ridge. In

doing so I narrowly escaped a serious mishap. Having had very little experience of mountaineering above the snow line, I forsook the more tedious rocky descent for what appeared to me an easier method down the edge of a snow-slope. I had not gone far on the hardened surface when, to my dismay, I slipped, and found myself sliding down at a rapidly increasing rate. I tried to hold myself back with my alpenstock and heels, but failed. My alpenstock flew out of my hands, and disappeared below. Fortunately the snow-shoot had a lateral slant, and by good luck, instead of descending to the bottom, I slid across to the other side, a distance of about fifty yards. My progress was arrested by some gravel softened by the water, which trickled down by the side of the snow. I was surprised to find I had received no serious damage, and after a little while was able to continue the descent in a less rapid manner. I found my alpenstock smashed at the bottom, about 200 yards below, and was sincerely thankful I had not followed the same course and suffered the same fate.

The forester, although he may have known something about sylvan sport, was quite out of his element amongst the rocks. He insisted on approaching the Chamois without any regard to the direction of the wind, in spite of both mine and the hunter's advice.

Forging ahead, he came upon them about eighty yards to windward, and they made off before I had time to get my shot. After about an hour we saw four more Chamois slowly on the move, evidently having become suspicious of our wind. We followed them up, and I managed to get within about 300 yards, but in attempting to become more closely acquainted, the wind, which was shifting every few minutes, betrayed me. We now followed the ridge in the direction they had taken, and on using the telescope found four Tûr feeding at the foot of some rocks about 600 or 700 yards away. The ground was too open for a direct approach, so we made about a two hours' *détour* in order to gain the rocks behind and above them. We got amongst rocks so precipitous that we were unable to proceed, and were compelled to go still further out of our way to gain anything like approachable ground. On retracing our steps in the direction of where we had last seen the Tûr, we came upon a herd of ten feeding in our direction, some 300 or 400 yards below us. Owing to the shiftiness of the wind, I dared not approach nearer than 200 yards, and although I got two chances I failed. They did not appear to know where the danger lay, and moved slowly along the valley, gradually ascending my side of the slope. I hurried along above them to try and

cut them off, but the ground was so difficult to move over rapidly, that I only had the chance of a long-range shot. I refrained from taking this forlorn chance, in the hope that they would settle down again and allow me to come up with them. I was to be disappointed, for they kept steadily on, and they were last seen passing over a ridge too distant for me to think of coming up with them again that day. Here, amongst the haunts of the Tûr, the Snow Partridge is frequently to be heard and seen. I counted a covey of ten of them moving about amongst the rocks. We were a long way from camp, and as it was getting late in the afternoon, it was necessary to lose no time in returning. On the way back we saw two Tûr on a ridge some little distance away, and again one buck with very fine horns returning up to the rocks from a lake in the valley. We were reluctantly compelled to leave them severely alone, and as it was we did not get back to camp until after 8 p.m., having been out since five in the morning.

On the third and last day, leaving the forester behind and taking with me two Russian hunters, I crossed the range and made westwards for the third ridge. About ten o'clock in the morning we saw a herd of six Chamois feeding in the irregular valley which lies between this ridge and the centre one.

They were too far in the open ground in the centre for us to approach them, so we watched them for a couple of hours in the hope they would feed towards the rocks and then lie down. Unfortunately for us they decided to take their siesta out in the open; moreover, the wind was again very shifty, so we decided that under the circumstances a successful stalk was quite out of the question. The hunters proposed they should try to drive them in my direction, and I agreed to the experiment. I remained on the ridge above, with a chamois-path leading up on either side of me, while the hunters descended into the valley and worked their way round to the far side of them. They intended showing themselves simultaneously at different points, in the hope and expectation that the disturbed Chamois would make for the heights in my direction. Unfortunately they commenced to feed away farther up the valley, and one of the hunters showing himself before he had got far enough round, they, after a little hesitation as to the direction they should take, trotted off up the valley away from me. From my elevated position I observed that when one of the hunters passed about 500 yards to windward, but out of their sight, they became distinctly suspicious, but after a few minutes' uneasiness went on feeding again until he showed

himself about half an hour afterwards. They had not been very much disturbed, so we followed them up and found them quietly feeding about two miles further on. They got our wind again, and did not stop until they were out of sight. We now returned



HILLS AND MAIN RANGE, CAUCASUS.

to camp disappointed, not from the absence of game, but with the shiftiness of the wind and our want of success.

Next morning, the 31st August, we lifted camp and ascended the Arkhyz valley for about ten versts; leaving the western end of the Kiafar hills

on our right, we struck up towards the left, through a pine wood, and camped at an elevation of about 6000 feet on some pasture land forming the watershed between the Zellentchuk and the Laba sources. This camp was a good hour's ride from the western extremity of the Kiafar range, which promised a



TOO HEAVY.

continuation of sport. The hunters, for some reason known only to themselves, dissuaded D. from camping at the foot of the range on the pretence of scarcity of fuel.

It had been noticed that one or two of the packmen had persistently loaded their horses very lightly, and had resented remonstrance, so D. decided to dispense

with their services. Our caravan, all told, consisted of thirty-eight horses and thirty people. D. now made a slight reduction by dismissing three of the packmen with their two horses. He had brought with him a Cossack officer, a ferocious-looking old gentleman named Krym; he was a native and a Mahomedan, and derived some of his apparent fierceness from the fact that his beard was dyed a fiery red. His presence was to have had a restraining effect upon the attendants; however, although he did a considerable amount of shouting, little heed was paid to his commands, for their free independent life had not accustomed them to discipline of any sort. Although these natives were of a somewhat wild and turbulent temperament, they were by no means ill-natured fellows, and at times were quite boyish in the exuberance of their light-heartedness. Most nights they amused themselves with music, song, and dance round their camp-fire; and as the tom-toming and shouting became loud and furious, the wildness of



OUR COMPANION KRYM.

the dance was worked up to a frenzy, until several of them were madly skipping round and into the fire, heedless of their bare feet.

We stayed at this camping ground until the 12th of September, but the weather was rather bad, and only allowed D. four days' stalking.

On the first day D., taking with him Nagoï as chief adviser, rode to the range opposite the camp, and spied out its rocky face. Seeing nothing, he ascended to a saddle to the west, and after examining the far side of the range without finding game, he went still further west, and followed a ridge which joined the range at right angles.

On diligently using his glass, he saw some distance beyond a snow slope a Tûr feeding amongst the rocks. D. crossed the snow in sight, but the beast was such a long way off that he did not notice the approaching danger, and continued to feed quietly on.

D. now made a circuit of about two hours to get to leeward. On approaching, the animal had disappeared. Although a considerable noise had been made amongst the rolling stones, D. thought the beast had not been disturbed, but had merely fed away in some other direction. So he made for the top of the ridge, and soon picked out with his glass two very good bucks feeding on a grassy spot on the opposite side of a

corrie about a mile away. They moved into an exposed position and lay down.

It was impossible to stalk them directly and from below, as it would have necessitated crossing several snow slopes in full view, while to have approached



OUR CAMP ON THE PASS, ZELLENTCHUK-LABA.

them from behind and above would have involved something like a four hours' *détour*, and even then the nearest cover was a rock some 300 yards distant. So after watching them for some time in the hope they would move into more favourable ground, Nagoï, who had had previous experience of the corrie, and knew

the tracks which the Tûr would be likely to take on being disturbed, suggested that a hunter should move them by showing himself.

On the near side of the corrie there were two passes by which the Tûr might escape. Consequently, while Nagoï remained at one pass to show himself, Ermolenko, one of the Grand Duke's hunters, gained the opposite side of the corrie, and showed himself at a rock above and beyond them. D. ensconced himself behind a rock which commanded the second pass.

On the hunter showing himself, the animals moved quickly across the corrie, and being joined by three others, formed a procession, and made for the pass which D. commanded. They had reached within about 300 yards of him, when unfortunately the mist came up and hid them from view. They must have passed quite near him, for he heard the rolling stones caused by their progress up the rocks for nearly ten minutes, although he was unable to see anything.

As the mist did not clear, D. joined Nagoï, and it was decided that under the circumstances a return to camp was advisable. This was accomplished with some difficulty, but without mishap.

On the second day D., accompanied by Mr. Little-dale, did not start until the rather late hour of six,

owing to some delay in catching the horses. They rode up the Arkhyz valley as far as the sources of the Arkhyz stream.

The weather did not look very promising, and rain coming on shortly after starting, made them decide



NATIVE CAMP.

to return. It soon stopped, however, and as the sky looked more promising, they changed their minds again, and rode up the Arkhyz valley as far as the sources of the stream. They had with them as principal hunters Nagoï, Mazan, and the Grand Duke's two men, Ermolenko and Kroutenko.

D. and Mr. Littledale now drew lots for choice of ground. Fortune decided that D. should go westward in the direction of very likely ground, whilst Mr. Littledale should try his luck in the opposite direction.

It had been decided that Mr. Littledale should take Nagoï and one of the Grand Duke's men, whilst D. should retain the services of Mazan and the other Russian hunter. Nagoï wanted to go westward, where he knew game was plentiful, and showed distinct annoyance when he could not have his own way. It was only with reluctance that this keen old sportsman was prevailed upon to accept the decree of fate.

On reaching the top of the ridge D. and his hunters quickly picked out a herd of Tûr, fifteen males and one female, some very good heads among them. They were lying down towards the upper end of a rocky corrie.

A council of war was held to decide the better way of approaching them, whether from above or below. The Russian hunter advised making a circuit to the left along the main ridge and approaching from above, for judging by the direction of the wind where they were, he thought it would be blowing up the valley.

D., on the other hand, thought they might be approached more successfully by working to the right

and getting into the bottom of the valley below them, as they were just above a terraced series of rocks which would afford fair cover for the near approach. Moreover, he thought the direction of the wind in his immediate vicinity did not necessarily indicate its direction in the more exposed portion of the valley, and that it might be merely a local wind dependent upon the particular formation of the rocks. He decided, however, to follow out the Russian hunter's idea.

Before they had gone very far, the direction of the wind changed, as D. had suspected, so they retraced their steps along the ridge and made a descent into the valley below the herd.

At the bottom of the valley at the foot of the rocky terraces was a lake. The descent from the ridge to this lake, a distance of 700 or 800 yards, was exposed to view, and involved crossing one or two snow-slopes in sight. D. and his hunters negotiated these slopes without arousing suspicion by keeping to hands of earth and stones which conveniently crossed them. Having reached the lake, they soon found cover under the terraced rocks about 500 yards away from the herd. The descent had been made so slowly and carefully that although they had been two and a half hours exposed to view, the herd had not been disturbed.

Occasional showers of hail and rain, as well as the mist, had materially helped to cover their advance. The wind seemed rather uncertain, and D. feared it might betray them; they succeeded, however, in ascending, under cover of the rocky terraces, to within about 350 yards without creating suspicion.

The herd had by this time fed some distance from the rocks, so they were only able to approach a few yards nearer, and even then had been compelled to expose themselves for a short time, fortunately without being seen. Again nature seemed determined to help D. The rain which had been falling for some time increased, and formed a prelude to a heavy thunderstorm which broke over the valley. The herd in their fear crowded together, and D., during a peal of thunder, managed to get two shots at them. They stood bewildered, not knowing whence the danger came, nor its nature. After a moment they moved in his direction for nearly 100 yards, and then stopped, affording him two more shots. They moved with such hesitation and made so many stops, that he had time to get off eight shots before they finally disappeared. Four Tûr had been hit, three of which they secured; the fourth was seen to disappear slowly over a distant ridge. One of them gave some little trouble before he was finally disabled. He

descended with a broken leg to the lake below, and on being pursued plunged in. His capture was effected by Mazan, who followed him and dragged him out by his horns. The light was so bad that D. was unable to see the effect of his first and second shots, and although he found no result that day, on going over the same ground two or three days afterwards a carcass minus the head and skin was found behind a rock near the spot where the herd was first attacked. Where the horns and skin had disappeared to remained a mystery, but Mazan was suspected of having gone out on the following day and appropriated these trophies, despite the fact that he stoutly denied the accusation.

The stalk had taken seven hours, and by the time they had secured the three heads it was five o'clock. The lightning and thunder continued, the snow, hail, and mist became rapidly worse, and it began to get dark. They had two difficult ridges to get across before they could reach their horses, and it was quite dark ere they had crossed the first one. After two hours of this dangerous work, during which D. lost his alpenstock, and at times found it necessary to look for tracks by striking matches, the horses were found. Camp was not reached until ten o'clock. D. vowed he would never allow darkness to overtake him again whilst in such difficult ground.

On the next day the hunters took the horses and brought in three very good heads, the result of the previous day's sport. Measurements, 37, 35½, and 33 inches.

D. did not go out again until the 5th, when, accompanied by Nagoi, he went in the same direction as on the 2nd. In the night there had been a fall of snow, which now melting, made walking both difficult and dangerous. Nothing was seen except fifteen Chamois playing on the snow. It was on this day that Ermolenko, who had been sent to spy, found by the presence of vultures the carcass of the fourth Tûr killed on the 2nd. The Chamois were left alone, and an early return to camp made.

The weather now became very unsettled, snow, rain, and mist forbidding any attempt amongst the high rocks. D. was not able to go out again until the 8th. This time, taking a tent with the intention of staying out all night, he went beyond the Arkhyz valley to some likely-looking rocky corries at the sources of the Atzgara river.

On reaching the top of one of the main ridges of the Atzgara rocks, Mazan, who accompanied D., picked out a herd of about thirty Tûr lying on a grassy slope of a corrie beneath. Through the telescope it was seen to consist of nearly all females, with a few young

bucks not worth stalking. A little farther on a couple of does and a kid were seen lying near a lake in the corrie. They now crossed the corrie, and the does were so tame that they were not roused until D. passed within about fifty yards of them. On



A HALT BY THE SNOW.

reaching the opposite ridge, after some difficult climbing, a broken valley with the Atzgara rushing down it lay before them. On following this ridge, two more does were seen about eighty yards below. After continuing their course for about another two miles, the mist rolled up in a thick bank, and the whole

corrie was rapidly filled with such a dense milk-like mass, that the sun behind them threw shadows of their figures on to it as on to a white screen. These shadowgraphs were somewhat startling, from their magnitude and being surrounded by a series of haloes. After waiting two hours in vain for the mist to clear, they descended to the Atzgara river, where the temporary camp had already been pitched. It was still early, and as the weather was so unsettled, D. decided to return at once to the permanent camp. The weather continued to be unsettled, and as the report was brought in that stags had been heard calling in the Zagdan valley, about fifteen versts further on, the camp was struck on the 12th and moved down to that region.

While at the Zellentchuk-Laba camp I went out five times. On the left of the camp were a series of deep, rocky, snow-clad corries, running down to the upper part of the Zagdan valley.

On my first day out, ascending through a pine wood that flanked our camp on the left, I made for the nearest of these corries, which at a distance certainly looked likely ground for game. On the higher pastures we found large numbers of horses and sheep, and, thinking that the place was unpromising, were proceeding rather carelessly, when to our sur-

prise we suddenly startled a herd of six Chamois, which were grazing on the camp side of the near ridge of the corrie. They were not very much frightened, and gently trotted over the ridge and up the corrie. We followed their direction for about



ON THE WAY TO THE ZAGDAN VALLEY.

two miles, and found them grazing at the foot of some rocks. After watching them for a while some of them lay down, so we proceeded to stalk them. Chamois never remain long in one place, and when we approached they had moved, and were feeding up the valley. We patiently waited and watched to

see if they would settle again. They went right to the top of the corrie, and at first it looked as if they were going to disappear into the valley beyond. Our patience was rewarded at last, for just when we were giving up hope, they turned round, and after crossing a large patch of snow, fed back again in the direction of the rocks below us. Having waited until the last one had disappeared under the rocks, we cautiously and with considerable difficulty descended until we caught sight of an outlying one feeding on a patch of grass a little over 100 yards below us. I fired, and the animal rolled out of sight badly hit. On hearing the report the others came from under the rocks into view, and there stood, unable to locate the danger.

I fired again and badly wounded a second one, which went some distance on the snow-slope and then slid helplessly down for about a couple of hundred yards. On coming up to them I was disappointed to find they were both females. The stalk having occupied nearly six hours, we made back for camp.

On the second day I went to the larger rocks at the western end of the Kiafar hills, and going a little eastwards towards our last camp across the range, found three old buck Chamois feeding in the valley below. They were in an unstalkable position, for directly between us was a large snow-slope, extending to the

right to very steep and dangerous rocks, which prohibited a *détour* and descent that way, while a circuit to the left was contra-indicated on account of the wind. We watched them for about two hours in the hope they would move, and our patience was rewarded by seeing them cross a patch of snow and lie down about 250 yards below us. The hunter advised me to take my chance, but thinking I might get a little nearer by descending unseen along the edge of the snow by the side of the rocks to the right, I attempted to do so. One of the Chamois lying farther out than the other two detected me and gave a whistle of warning, with the result that they quickly gained the precipitous rocks. Pursuit was further discouraged, as now a heavy thunderstorm came on, accompanied by a piercing wind and heavy hail, so I returned to camp regretting I had not taken my hunter's advice.

On the third a visit to the high rocks was out of question, for the elements, which had been behaving very badly all night, entertained us with a continuation of hail, thunder, and lightning the whole day.

On the fourth, although it was still blowing and raining a little, I and my hunter made for a saddle to the left of the high rocks on the range visited before. On reaching the other side, a huge corrie with high

ridges on either side sloped down in front of us. The wind unfortunately was blowing directly down the corrie, so before proceeding we sat down to spy, and soon noticed a herd of about ten female Tûr move from ground 200 yards below towards the foot of the rocks on the left, and there stop, showing signs of uneasiness. They had unfortunately winded us slightly, although they were so much below us that they had been out of sight when first disturbed. One would have expected from our elevated position our wind would have been carried over them. Near the Tûr we now picked out a solitary old buck Chamois quietly feeding amongst the rocks. On attempting to move, we evidently disturbed both Tûr and Chamois, for they all disappeared over the ridge on the left. We approached the spot whence they had disappeared. The Tûr were nowhere to be seen. We found the Chamois, however, lying down about 300 yards away. There was plenty of cover for a nearer approach, but the ground was so difficult that, although I proceeded as carefully as possible, the stones I unavoidably dislodged rolled so noisily, that before I reached the projection of rock whence I could get a shot the beast had moved. The wind was good, and I had not shown myself, so I came to the conclusion that Chamois are more easily disturbed by rolling stones than Tûr, the

higher and more rocky haunts of which accustom them to this noise, which of necessity accompanies nearly every step they take. Although I followed in his direction, I failed to see anything more either of him or any other game.

On the fifth I crossed the same saddle as the day before, and tried a large corrie to the left of the one I had investigated the previous day. We saw a Chamois feeding at the foot of some rocks, and though the wind was blowing down the corrie as on the previous day, our wind must have passed over him, for he showed no signs of suspicion. We made a circuit to the right and got to leeward, but before we had proceeded very far saw our Chamois feed out into the open, followed by five others. After watching them for an hour and a half in the hope and expectation that they would again return to the foot of the rocks for their morning siesta, we were disappointed to see them disappear down the right side of the ravine. We therefore ascended some high rocks to the right in order to work round to leeward of them, and on looking over into the corrie saw feeding in its centre, some thousand feet below us, a herd of eight Tûr, with two fair heads, in addition to our Chamois. We had not gone far enough as regards the wind, for

although the Chamois continued feeding undisturbed, the Tûr, which were quite close to them and subject to the same wind influence, scented us; they became at once suspicious, and made for the rocks on the opposite side, so we now forsook the Chamois and went after the Tûr, attempting to get to the right side of them as regards the wind. This we endeavoured to do by following a high curved ridge, which joined on to the other side of the valley. After proceeding some way we were compelled to retrace our steps owing to the increasing difficulty of the rocks, and on descending we came upon a male Tûr standing guard over a doe and kid which were lying down. I attempted to approach, but the wary sentinel was too much for me; before I could get within range he detected me, and conducted his charges into safer ground. We saw nothing further of our Tûr, so we devoted our attention to the Chamois, which we found feeding near the bottom of the same corrie. The ground did not permit of a nearer approach than of about 250 yards, so I had to take my chance at this comparatively long range. My practice was not equal to the occasion, and I was compelled to return to camp unsuccessful, after having been on the move from six o'clock in the morning until seven in the evening.

On the sixth I made for the rocks on the left of the camp, where I had shot the two Chamois a few days before. Although I diligently examined a large extent of ground, I did not see a vestige of game, so descended to the pine woods below on the off-chance of coming across a Bear, Stag, or Wild-boar, but saw nothing beyond tracks.

The weather was so bad for the remaining part of our stay in this camp, that I was only able to make one more stalk, when I again tried the ground so prolific in game—the rocky corries beyond the Kiafar range. I found three very fine Chamois, and by removing my boots and approaching very carefully, I succeeded in getting within 100 yards, but failed so ignominiously with the rifle, that all three escaped with nothing more serious than a scaring.

On the twelfth the weather had become uncertain amongst the high rocks, and reports had been brought in that stags were now calling in the Zagdan valley, so Littledale and D. decided to move down into it, and devote their attention to that noble beast of the woods. As likely deer ground was limited, it was decided I should return in the direction of our last camp, and again work the corries beyond the Kiafar range opposite our last camp. Starting at

seven a.m., and taking with me a native hunter and a baggage man, with three horses, a light tent, sleeping bag, provisions, etc., I retraced my steps, and at eleven a.m. camped not far from the site of our Arkhyz camp, but much higher up—right above the timber line. I wanted to start off at once and get a half-day's work in, but I was unable to induce my hunters to move for nearly an hour and a half, until they had partaken of a substantial meal. They soon had a good fire, at which ribs of sheep spitted on a green stick were quickly roasting and millet seed boiling. When the millet was cooked, the water was drained off and used as a beverage, and the seed mashed up into a sort of dough, which they ate with their meat. Mutton and millet-seed dough formed their sole article of diet, except when I treated them to such luxuries as an occasional cake of chocolate and a kolanut biscuit. Having put up my tent, I started out with my hunter about 12.30, and, working to the eastward, commenced the ascent of the range. There was no game to be seen on the valley side, and on reaching the summit of the ridge we were disappointed to find the valley beyond full of mist. The sun, which was shining brightly behind us, shadowgraphed our figures on this wall of mist. The shadow was surrounded by three or four

rainbow-like haloes, and to the amusement of both myself and the hunter, I converted the shadowgraph into an animatograph by various movements which were clearly and accurately portrayed on this excellent screen. Several times the mist lifted to some extent, and gave us a view of the top of the ridge on the opposite side of this big corrie. Through the breaks in the mist we once or twice caught sight of two black moving objects on the opposite slope. The glass showed them to be Bears. We attempted to cross the corrie, but the rocks and snow-slopes were so difficult, that after two unsuccessful attempts the hunter gave me to understand that it was too dangerous. However, seeing I was anxious to proceed, he was persuaded to make a third and successful attempt through the mist, snow, and rocks. On reaching the top of the opposite ridge we found it comparatively free from mist. We made for the summit of some rocks which overlooked the small grassy slope where we had last seen the Bears feeding, and found them still there, but rather too far off for a successful shot. They appeared to be feeding towards the foot of the rocks, so we waited. It was some time before they decided to approach, and as the mist kept coming up and obscuring them from view it was nearly dusk before I got my

chance. They were a couple of hundred yards below me, so taking off my boots to get a better grip on the rocks, I made a partial descent down a stone chute to a projecting and slanting ledge of rock about 100 yards above them. The hunter held on to my coat, and leaning over, I was able to get in two shots from this insecure position. Neither of them moved, so loading again I gave them one more shot each: they rolled over on to a snow-slope below, where I found them both dead; they were young lepes, and smaller than I had expected. It was now rapidly getting dark, so we were compelled to leave them unskinned and hasten back to camp. On attempting the ascent of the camp side of the corrie we got into difficult ground, and had to retrace our way back again. Fortunately the moon rose early, and after a somewhat anxious time we reached the top of the ridge up a comparatively easy snow-slope, and got safely back to camp soon after nine p.m.

The following morning we did not start until about seven o'clock, as I was delayed by having to prepare my breakfast. We made for the saddle to the left of our camp, and before reaching it saw a herd of fifteen Chamois feeding just below the summit. We approached to within about 300 yards, when they became

suspicious and began to move, evidently having seen us. We lay down and watched them for about an hour. They did not go far. An old buck stationed himself on a rock commanding a view of our position, whilst the others settled down to feed again. As we kept motionless, the sentinel Chamois' suspicions were apparently allayed, for he joined the others, and the herd continued to feed upwards towards the ridge. There were only two ways of approach, one from above amongst very difficult rocks, the other by making a very wide *détour* below them, on account of the wind. We decided the chance of Chamois did not justify the dangerous approach from above. It would have taken a long time to have made the circuit below; moreover, we were in quest of 'Tûr, so we left them and crossed the saddle in sight, at a distance of 400 yards. Instinct must have told them they had nothing to fear from us, for they took no further notice. We now gained the ridge at right angles to the main ridge, and the hunter, Usoup, pointed out two good heads and a young Tûr on the sky line of the main ridge. The glass showed them to have very fine horns, and made me exceedingly anxious to become better acquainted with them. We watched them descend about one third of the way down the precipitous and rocky slope and lie down.

It was impossible to approach them from below as we should have to cross large snow-slopes in sight, while from above Usoup said the rocks were impossible. He proposed waiting until they should move into easier stalking ground, but as that would have meant some hours, with the possibility even then of their not fulfilling his expectation, I pressed the attempt of an approach from the rocks, pointing out to him that the day before he had given me to understand the way was too dangerous when eventually we had succeeded. He assented to an attempt, but in a tone which implied that if I knew better than he I might try it, and I should find out my mistake. When we came to a narrow ledge with overhanging rocks above and a sheer drop below he skipped across, and then, in an exulting tone, asked me how I liked it. I certainly did not like it, but not caring to give in, I divested myself of my boots and other impediments, and with the help of Usoup, who was by no means a bad sort, succeeded in getting myself and my belongings round this difficult corner. Having reached the top of the main ridge from the camp side, we proceeded to make the still difficult descent to the unsuspecting Tûr below. We noticed a very fine Tûr feeding about 800 yards away to our left, and though we continued our present stalk in sight

of him, he fed quietly on, evidently not seeing us. We descended to within about 120 yards over the snow and rocks, and found the best head lying end on, and the other one partly hidden by a rock. I drew a bead on the former, and on firing he stood



NATIVE HUNTER, USOUP.

up; on receiving my second shot he disappeared amongst the rocks below. We now hurried down as fast as the ground would allow, and I found my beast lying wounded on a snow-slope. I gave him two more shots, and he partly rolled and partly ran down the slope. The other two now appeared from under the rocks, and succeeded in making their

escape before I could get a shot at them. Usoup quickly climbed down and despatched him. I was delighted to find I had secured horns over 31 inches long and nearly 12 inches in girth. Although I had fired four shots, the Tûr we had seen feeding about 800 yards away had not been disturbed, and had lain down under some rocks on the near side of the main ridge. To gain cover we crossed it and approached on the Arkhyz valley side, until we reached a spot opposite to where we had last seen him. We passed within about 300 yards of a herd of Chamois quietly feeding farther to the left. Recrossing the ridge, we proceeded to approach him from above. Usoup, in his eagerness, got ahead of me, and on looking over a ledge of rock, found the Tûr about 40 yards below. He beckoned me on, but when I got up and peeped over the animal had become suspicious, probably having seen the hunter's head. He stood up, looked in our direction for a moment, and then made off. I fired as he disappeared round the corner of a rock, but he escaped injury, and did not stop until he was right out of sight. The way back took us across the ridge from which we had first seen our Tûr. From the top of it we now made out another herd of Chamois feeding in the corrie beyond. The animals were partly hidden by the

mist, and although we waited for an hour for it to lift, it came down thicker than ever, and we were compelled to leave them and make our way back to camp, getting there soon after dark.

On the previous day I had intended devoting my attention to the ridge extending at right angles to the main one, but as we found the Tûr on the main ridge itself, the better part of the branch one had not been disturbed, so to-day I decided to investigate it. On gaining the ridge we saw a herd of Chamois, probably the same seen through the mist the day before, feeding below us in the corrie on the right. We passed quite close to them without disturbing them, and on following the ridge for some distance Usoup picked out two Tûr 800 yards away, both good heads, feeding on the rocky slopes of the corrie on our left. They separated, and the finer head fed over a saddle on the ridge into the following corrie. We approached and found him lying down about 200 yards below. He showed some suspicion, for he kept a constant watch in our direction. After waiting about half an hour in the hope he would settle down and allow a little nearer approach, he got up, walked on about 100 yards, and again lay down. We now changed our position, and were able to climb down out of sight to within range of shot. He

was lying with his head towards me, so I waited for him to change his position. He soon obliged me, for again he became restless, and after looking in our direction suspiciously for a few minutes stood up broadside on. I now availed myself of this opportunity, and hitting him well forward rolled him over. He was quite dead when we reached him, and proved to be a fine old fellow, with horns measuring above thirty-two inches.

We now went in search of the other, and soon found him amongst the rocks, about 600 yards away from where I fired, quite undisturbed. He was feeding rather quickly by a rocky spur, so we made a long circuit, expecting to find him on the other side of it. When we got up he had not crossed the summit; at any rate, he was nowhere to be seen, so we retraced our steps. The ground here was very difficult; the stone-shoots which had to be crossed were so steep that every footstep had to be tested, and the least weight put on what appeared a promising piece of rock was liable to precipitate it to the valley below. Under these circumstances my progress was extremely slow, while the agile Usoup, cat-like in his movements, had quickly forged ahead of me and reached the summit of the spur, while I was still struggling yet a long way off. Usoup, seeing my difficulties,

hastened back to help me, and informed me that he had found the Tûr only about sixty yards below the summit. Unfortunately when I arrived on the scene the animal was nowhere to be seen.

The mist now began to envelope the summit, so we returned to the Tûr I had shot, and having secured the head and skin, proceeded up the corrie, making for camp. On the way back we found the Chamois in very much the same place as in the morning, five hours previously. We approached to within about 200 yards, and as they were feeding in our direction, waited behind a small rocky ridge in the hope that they would continue in the same direction. Something disturbed them, evidently not us, for a Chamois further up the corrie, about 500 yards away, whistled and trotted off, followed by those nearer us. They were not very much frightened, for they soon settled down to feed again at the foot of some precipitous rocks higher up the corrie. So we gained the top of these rocks commanding their position, and found sufficient cover to approach within 150 yards of the nearest one. I fired and missed, whereupon the whole herd quickly placed themselves out of danger.

The mist, which had been coming and going for the last two hours, now settled down in earnest, so we hastened back to camp, arriving some time after night-

fall. I should have liked to have stayed two or three days longer on this promising ground, but my supplies were exhausted ; moreover, I did not know how long D. might remain in the Zagdan valley, and was anxious to overtake him there, as I did not know where his next camp would be. Consequently, on the next morning, the 15th, we got away by eight, and halting for an hour at the site of the Zellentchuk-Laba camp, reached D. in the Zagdan valley about three o'clock. On the way we heard several Stags calling.

The Zagdan valley, with its splendid coniferous woods stretching on either slope, appeared to promise the best chance of Stags anywhere in that region, but D. was doomed to disappointment. Arriving there on the 12th, the morning of the 13th failed to give much encouragement, as hunters who had been sent out for the night came in reporting that no calls had been heard. D., however, taking with him Nagoï and one of the Grand Duke's hunters, crossed the Big Laba river, which runs through the valley, and worked his way up through the dense underwood on the thickly-wooded slopes. In this maze he lost Nagoï, but still pressed on with his Russian hunter. He found traces of deer—recently vacated seats and trees which had been freshly barked by their horns ; but after waiting for hours without hearing a call, and

coming across the tracks and camping-place of some native hunters, he gave it up as a bad job and returned to camp. Mr. Littledale, who had been sleeping out in the woods all night, returned and said he had heard two stags calling during the night, but nothing after five in the morning.

On the 14th D. was so discouraged by his previous day's experience that he left the woods alone, and with Madame Demidoff devoted the day to fishing in the Big Laba. The river was full of unsophisticated Trout, and they both returned to camp with the very respectable basket of 130. They resemble the Trout of Scottish streams, but do not run to any considerable size, the best scaling from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound. D. tried several flies, and found that a combination of grey and green, and red and white, were taken most freely. There must have been some game about, for on the sand by the river were to be seen tracks of Bear, Stag, Boar, and also Wild Cat. On the 15th, while Mr. Littledale went down the valley to sleep out again, D., taking with him one of the Russian hunters, went up the valley in the direction of the last camp, where Mr. Littledale had heard the two stags calling the night before. No call, however, was to be heard, and nothing was seen except a Wolf and the tracks of a Stag made that morning.

As the Zagdan valley had proved so disappointing, D. decided to strike camp, so on the 16th, just before noon, the caravan started for the sources of the Atzgara, and after a hard climb up the steep side of this deep valley we gained our camping ground



OUR WAY OVER A PASS FROM THE ZAGDAN VALLEY.

in the neighbouring valley of the Atzgara river, after a six hours' march. By this time our experience of camping had been considerable, and there was so little delay in getting our tents up and making things ship-shape, that within an hour and a half after reaching our ground we were comfortably sitting

down to a five-course dinner. We started with soup, followed by boiled Trout, sixteen of which I had caught at the Zagdan camp, and brought alive in a bucket. Our *entrée* took the form of an excellent dish of mushrooms, which Mr. Littledale found on the march.



ATZGARA ROCKS.

Our *pièce de résistance* was supplied by the homely or rather mountain sheep, and we finished up with tinned fruit as a sweet. Up to the Zagdan camp, Battalpaschinsk and the monastery formed our basis of supply as regards such articles as bread, flour, eggs, etc. On moving to the sources of the Atzgara,

Storojevoi, thirty miles below, took their place. All along our route raspberries and currants were to be found in great profusion, and when associated with David's pastry supplied us with most acceptable dishes. By no means the least appreciated of our daily fare were the fresh rolls of bread which Madame Demidoff was kind enough to make for us. Unfortunately the smallness of the field-oven used to bake them limited the supply, and made it necessary to carefully ration them out. When short of game we were always able to get sheep from one of the numerous *koschs*, which were unfortunately never far from us, so at no time was there any fear of us running short of meat.

On the right-hand side of the valley were some lofty rocks, which extended eastwards to the sources of the Chilick, while the left slope ran up to some precipitous limestone rocks, with high snow-clad ridges beyond. We stayed in the Atzgara valley until the 21st, and whilst at this camp D. went out three times.

On the first day (17th September), taking with him Nagoï and a Russian hunter, he ascended the left slope of the valley in the direction of the limestone rocks. The first corrie he inspected, though large, rugged, and Tûr-like in appearance, proved disappointing; but

on crossing it, and getting a view from the opposite ridge of a large corrie beyond, a herd of fifteen Chamois were seen playing on the snow nearly a mile away, while at the bottom of an adjacent one were two female Tûr feeding under some rocks. He decided to



MAKING BREAD.

stalk the Chamois. On approaching he saw three more Tûr—a couple of does and a buck, too young to entice him from the Chamois. He was able to approach within 120 yards, and found them still on the snow-slope where first seen. They soon showed signs of alarm, probably having caught sight of the glint on

the barrel of his rifle. They stood a few seconds before making up their minds what direction to take. D. took advantage of their hesitation, and succeeded in securing one of them.

He now gained the summit of the high limestone ridge, which he followed down in the direction of the valley, spying on either side as he went along. He soon made out five Chamois—one rather good buck—lying on the snow below, and was able to gain a ledge of rock immediately overlooking them within shooting range. His hunter held him by the coat, and so enabled him to get a vertical shot at the buck below. Though his foreleg was broken, the animal succeeded in making good his escape. A return to camp was now made.

On the next day (18th) D., taking with him Mazan and one of the Russian hunters, crossed the Atzgara stream and went in the direction of the Chilick rocks. On ascending the large corrie which led up to the rocks, he saw a young Tûr amongst some rugged, rocky ground high up on the right, and when he had reached about half-way up, picked out a Bear on the stony slopes on the left-hand side. The wind was blowing up the corrie, so leaving Mazan at the bottom, D., accompanied by his Russian hunter, made a circuit below the beast, and approached him from a point

higher up the corrie to leeward. The approach was made from 500 to 300 yards in sight of him, but he was so busily engaged amongst some roots he had found that he did not notice them. Fifty yards nearer there was rocky, broken ground, which would



OUR CAMP.

afford cover and still closer approach, so waiting until his back was turned, they ran across the intervening space, and then succeeded in getting within 150 yards without disturbing him. D. fired, producing no greater result than to surprise Bruin, who merely sat up and looked round. A second shot found him, for he

grunted loudly and moved off down the slope towards the rocks below. A pool of blood was to be found where he had stood. The hunter attempted to follow him up, but although he tracked him by blood on the snow for quite a mile, he did not succeed in finding him. This Bear was a fine fellow, and wore a silvery grey coat. D. found nothing among the Chilick rocks, so returned to camp, and on the way back saw a large herd of Tûr, consisting of twenty-five females and a couple of young bucks, which he did not disturb.

On the 19th D. tried the Atzgara for Trout, but failed to find any. Madame Demidoff and Mr. Littledale went down the valley to a lower ridge on the right in search of Chamois, and although they found eight, as well as several female Tûr and young bucks, rain and mist prevented any chance of successful stalking. On the 20th no one moved out of camp, as it rained hard all day.

On the 21st camp was struck, and whilst the caravan moved out of the Atzgara valley into fresh camping ground in the Urup valley, Madame Demidoff, who had been hitherto very unlucky as regards weather when after Chamois, decided to make another attempt. Accompanied by D. and Mr. Littledale, she made for the ridge on the right, which they had

visited on the previous day. On the way they saw three Wild-boar and a female Tûr in the distance on the top of a ridge. On reaching the timber line, several Chamois were seen at the edge of the wood, but they quickly disappeared. After going for about two hours, a herd of five Chamois were made out on the side of a distant corrie about 1000 yards away. They attempted to approach, and it was only after about two hours' laborious struggle over the difficult rocks and through the rhododendron-clad slopes that they reached the ridge which commanded a view of them. Two of them were about 200 yards below, and two more a little further away, about 300 yards distant. The ground here was too precipitous to allow a nearer approach; moreover, the Chamois had become a little suspicious, so Madame Demidoff was obliged to content herself with a long shot. The Chamois fired at moved on untouched for about 200 yards, and then made itself conspicuous by standing on a prominent rock. Madame Demidoff took this other poor chance, and the bullet was seen to strike the rock just below him. They now went in search of the new camp in the Urup valley, and reached it in mist and rain. Everybody was considerably exhausted, having been out on the move for nearly twelve hours.

While at the Atzgara camp I went out twice, both times to the high and promising rocks on the right of the valley. The first day I contented myself with trying the stream for trout, and came to the same conclusion that it was quite sterile as regards fish.

On the second day (18th) I set out with D., and accompanied him part of the way up the corrie in which he found the Bear. When he went on towards the Chilick rocks, I struck up to the left for the high ridge which ran along the Atzgara valley. I had not proceeded very far up before I heard D.'s shot, and then saw the Bear he had wounded coming in my direction 200 or 300 yards below me. I hoped and expected he would come up one of the ravines to gain the high rocks where I was, so I waited to receive him, but was disappointed, for although I watched the gullies all along nothing more was seen of him.

On following the ridge it divided lower down the valley. I took the right-hand ridge, and saw two female Tûr. On proceeding a little farther I spied out another lying down amongst the rocks below on the left hand. The rocks were very precipitous, and rendered the attempted approach difficult.

We were compelled to cross an almost perpendicular snow-slope, and although my hunter Usoup cut steps

for me in the hardened snow with his hunting-knife, his idea of the width of my stride was of such magnitude that I found the greatest possible difficulty in getting from one step to another, and I was considerably relieved to find myself safely across. The wind was variable, and when we got a view at about 150 yards from where the animal had last been seen, we found he had moved, having probably winded us.

We were now compelled to gain the summit of the ridge again and follow on by it, and we again found him lying down on some rocks below. We were able to drop down to within 150 yards from above without disturbing him.

The rocks on which the Tûr was lying were almost the same colour as its horns, and neither Usoup nor myself were able to satisfy ourselves as to the sex. Fearing to make such a blunder as to shoot a doe, I refrained until I could make certain, and dropped a small stone in its direction to make it stand up and enable us to decide the point. I hoped that it would have given me a few seconds, but unfortunately it made off at once, and although I let fly, I lost a very fair buck.

On proceeding we made out a solitary old buck perched up amongst very difficult rocks on the left

about 800 yards away, whilst on a grassy slope which ran from the foot of the right-hand side of the ridge a herd of about ten Tûr were to be seen feeding; they were mostly does and young ones, so we directed our attention to the old fellow amongst the rocks.

The approach was extremely difficult; in fact, after nearly two hours' climbing in my stockinged feet, Usoup decided it would be impossible to proceed in that direction. We made another attempt to get near him, and again had to give it up. On sighting the animal, Usoup asked me if I should make him a monetary present, as I had done previously, in the event of a successful stalk. I made no promise.

After our unsuccessful attempts, being tired, very footsore, and rather annoyed, I intimated that if the present had been promised a way of approach would have been found; whereupon Usoup showed righteous indignation, and gave me to understand he would have been no better than a dog if he had let such sordid motives influence him. As a matter of fact, I believe he had done his best, and though my knowledge of his character was necessarily limited, I feel sure that I had hurt his feelings, and that his indignation was genuine.

On reaching the foot of these precipitous rocks, we were tantalized by seeing the Tûr comparatively

safely ensconced only about 300 yards above us. I felt inclined to try my luck at this long range, but before I had made up my mind he had disappeared. Darkness overtook us before we had got half-way back, and we were considerably relieved when we sighted the camp lights.

On the following day (19th September) I made for the slope where we had seen the herd on the previous day. It was wet and slippery, and it took us nearly five hours before we reached our ground. We found them feeding out in the open, with very little cover for approach.

A hailstorm came on, and during it I was able to crawl within about 150 yards of the best buck in the herd. I secured him, and was disappointed to find that he was only four or five years old, and his horns did not quite reach twenty inches. The hail, rain, and mist compelled us now to return to camp.

The Urup valley, towards the head of which we camped, was a deep, heavily-wooded ravine running parallel to the lower part of the Atzgara, and separated from it by two large ridges thickly set with birch, mountain ash, and rhododendron, and bearing rocky terraces which afforded excellent ground for Chamois. At the head of the valley was the termination of the difficult, snow-clad, precipitous ridges which I had

visited previously. We stayed in the Urup valley from the 21st until the 24th September.

On the 22nd Mr. Littledale, taking with him a light tent, went down the Urup valley to the likely-looking woods on the right-hand side for a final attempt after Stag. D., taking with him Nagoï and one of the Russian hunters, rode up the valley to the snow-clad rocks at its head. After a two hours' ride they left the horses and made a steep ascent amongst the rocks. There was nothing to be seen on the Atzgara side of the ridge, but on the opposite side they picked out a couple of moving objects feeding on a distant slope at the foot of some rocks. On bringing the glass into play five Tûr were to be made out—all full-grown males. The wind was right, so D. stalked them directly. The ground was difficult, and they were compelled to cross four ravines and precipitous spurs before they came up to them. On peeping over the fourth ridge, the Tûr were to be seen lying down about 200 yards away on about the same level, but with two gullies in between, too exposed to allow a nearer approach; so D. took his chance at this long range, and wounded the finest one, which made for the rocks above. The others showed their inability to locate sound, and instead of making away from the danger they advanced to

the rocks behind which D. was posted, and allowed him a second shot at eighty yards, which reached its mark with fatal effect for one of them. The first beast hit had by this time climbed up to the rocks a couple of hundred yards above, and behind D. A second shot rolled him over. D. got in two more shots as the remaining three were ascending to their fastnesses above, with the result that another, though wounded, as shown by blood tracks, effected his escape. The mist now came down, and prevented the following up of the wounded beasts, so a return was made with two very fair heads, the horns of which measured well above thirty inches.

While at this camp I went out once and made for the ground where Madame Demidoff had tried for Chamois the day before. We had reached nearly as far as the Atzgara valley, when we made out seven Chamois feeding on a steep grassy slope below some rocky terraces about 1000 yards away. They were some distance down the corrie on the opposite side, so we were compelled to retrace our steps across the upper part of the valley, and though in sight of them, we were so far away that they did not notice us. Having gained the opposite ridge, we found five more in the next corrie about 400 yards away. We showed ourselves, and after standing for a few minutes they

moved off. We continued to stalk in quest of the herd we had seen first, keeping on the far side of the ridge just below the summit, and working laboriously through dense rhododendron, mountain ash, and birch. When we thought we were on a level with them we ascended to the top, and found them just below. We had probably shown ourselves too freely, for they stopped feeding and looked in our direction, but were evidently only slightly suspicious, for they did not move. We now gained a terrace about 100 yards above them, but as two of them had fed out from under the rocks on to a grassy slope, they must have seen sufficient of us to have been disturbed, for they whistled and made off for a distance of about 400 yards, and there stood, occasionally giving forth their note of alarm. We lay perfectly still for some time, and seeing nothing more of us, their suspicions became allayed, and they settled down again. Usoup now declared them to be does, so we abandoned them, and going in search of the other five, found them feeding at the foot of some very steep rocks about 150 yards below. The difficult nature of the ground prevented us from approaching any nearer, so I fired at a buck which showed himself the most. He stood perfectly still, and I succeeded in rolling him over with my second

shot. He turned out to be a young one with somewhat inferior horns. At 6 p.m. we were back in camp.

It was now getting late in the season, and at any time we were liable to be snowed up, and find great difficulty in getting our caravan out of the valley



OUR CARAVAN.

back to the plains; as it was, severe snow and hailstorms had warned us of the approach of bad weather, and hard frost at night had become quite a regular experience; consequently D. decided to terminate operations, and get back to Storojevoi as soon as possible. We had with us two wood-consuming stoves, which

had added materially to our comfort as the weather became colder. Two nights before leaving the Urup valley, soon after turning in, I was aroused by the cries of "Fire!" and, on turning out, found the fly of D.'s tent in flames. The heated chimney coming



OUR TENT AFTER THE FIRE.

in contact with the unprotected canvas of the fly had started the mischief. Although the tent was considerably burnt, the fire was so quickly got under that no very serious damage was sustained. Mr. Littledale was sleeping out that night, so fortunately D. and his wife were able to seek refuge in his tent. Next day Mr. Littledale returned, having

secured a Chamois, but had neither seen nor heard a Stag.

On the 24th September we lifted camp, and after a march of about thirty versts halted about ten versts from Storojevoi. On the following morning we rode



OUR LAST CAMP.

into the village, where carriages had been arranged to take us to Battalpaschinsk. During our short stay of two hours here the inhabitants took considerable interest in our arrangements, and when I attempted to take a few snapshots I was besieged by crowds, who, from their gestures, let me know they wished

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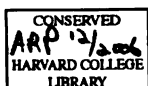
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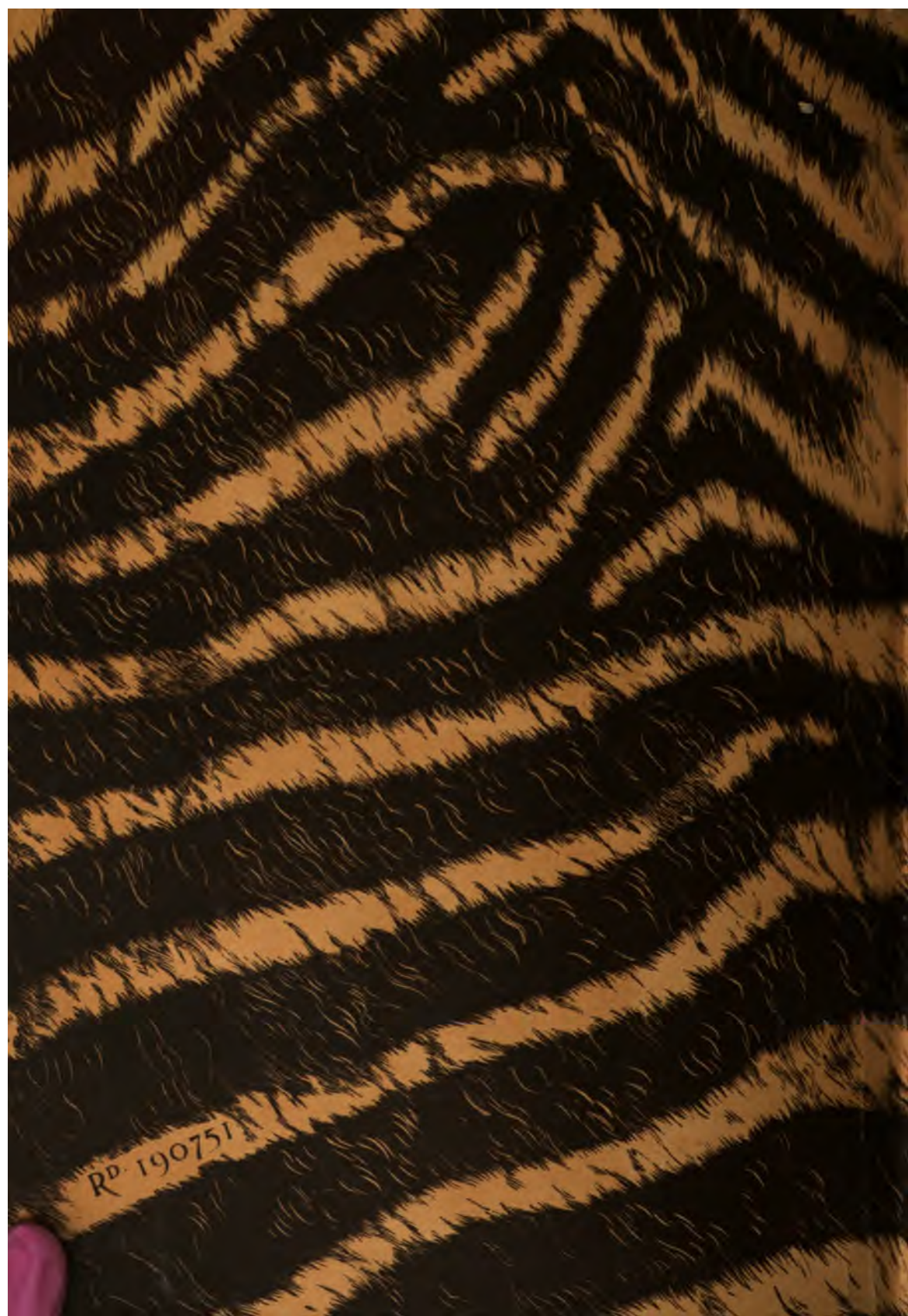
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